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ABSTRACT

The federally funded National Writing Project has 167 sites in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Of the eight sites in Mississippi, the Live Oak Writing Project is the newest, based at the Gulf Coast campus of the University of Southern Mississippi in Long Beach. A Congressional Committee on Appropriations special hearing was held to review the success and importance of federally funded teacher training programs, specifically the National Writing Project and the Live Oak Writing Project. This booklet contains the minutes of the hearing. The booklet is divided into the following sections: Opening Statement of Senator Thad Cochran; Statement of Dr. Richard Sterling, executive director, National Writing Project; Prepared Statement; Statement of Dr. Sherry Swain, director, Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project, Starkville, MS; Prepared Statement; Statement of Dr. Huntley Biggs, executive director, Mississippi Power Foundation; Prepared Statement; Statement of Kim Myrick Stasny, Ph.D., superintendent, Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District; Prepared Statement; Statement of Stacey Gorum, teacher, North Bay Elementary School; Statement of Sharon McKenna Ladner, curriculum instruction specialist, Pascagoula School District; Statement of Lisa Eveleigh, parent, North Elementary, Bay St. Louis, MS; Prepared Statement; National Writing Project Evaluation, Student Writing Achievement, Year One Results; National Writing Project Annual Report 2000; Letter from Amy Tuck, Lieutenant Governor, State of Mississippi, to Senator Thad Cochran; Prepared Statement of State Senator Alice V. Harden; Prepared Statement of Kim Patterson, co-director, Mississippi State University Writing/Thinking Project; Prepared Statement of Linda Buchanan; Prepared Statement of Jeanne R. Ezell; Prepared Statement of John W. Dorroh; and Prepared Statement of Katherine Dale Pohl, parent. (NKA)

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ED 456 436

S. HRG. 107–47

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

HEARING

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SPECIAL HEARING

APRIL 17, 2001—BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI

Printed for the use of the Committee on Appropriations

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NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT

TUESDAY, APRIL 17, 2001

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES,
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Bay St. Louis, MS.

The subcommittee met at 2 p.m., in the library of Bay-Waveland Middle School, Hon. Thad Cochran presiding.

Present: Senator Thad Cochran.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR THAD COCHRAN

Senator COCHRAN. Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to convene and welcome you to this hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations. The Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies is chaired by Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, who has authorized me to Chair this hearing today in Bay St. Louis.

I first want to thank Dr. Kim Stasny, superintendent of Bay-Waveland School District, and Mr. Chuck Benigno, assistant superintendent, who have provided valuable assistance to us in preparation for the hearing and for allowing us to use the Bay-Waveland Middle School as the site for our hearing today. Our subcommittee will review at this hearing the success and importance of federally-funded teacher training programs, specifically the National Writing Project, the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project and the Live Oak Writing Project.

Writing is essential for success in school and in the workplace. In 1990, I introduced legislation to make the National Writing Project a federally funded program. In 1991, $2 million was approved by Congress in appropriations for this program. Funding this year is $10 million. I am hopeful that my bill, which was recently introduced to reauthorize the program, will be included in the education legislation the Senate will consider next week.

The National Writing Project has 167 sites in 49 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. There are eight sites in Mississippi. The Live Oak Writing Project is the newest site, based at the Gulf Coast campus of the University of Southern Mississippi in Long Beach. This program raises $6 in local funding for every $1 in Federal funding it receives. It also has become a model program for improving teaching in other academic fields such as math, science and reading. Last year, the Writing Project served 1 of every 34 teachers in our country. It is the national as well as the

local effort to reinvigorate the teaching profession and improve students' literacy skills.

Expert teachers at each of the National Writing Project sites conduct a broad array of professional development programs to improve writing and learning in classrooms in all grade levels, kindergarten through university. Writing project teachers are an inspiration and resource for other teachers.

The National Writing Project was already a success when I learned about it from Dr. A.D. Seale, who was a professor at Mississippi State University at the time and in the administration of that university. His daughter, Sherry Swain, had told him that the writing project training she received as a first grade teacher was the best she had ever had. That was the first I ever had heard about the National Writing Project.

Other successful examples I later heard included the fact that the writing project sites in Mississippi partnerships supported the Federal Job Training Partnership Act. 1,500 JTPA students, after a single 6-week summer school course conducted by writing project teachers, advanced nearly 2 years in reading and mathematics.

In 1996, Mississippi State School Superintendent Dr. Thomas Burnham gave credit to the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project for the rise in standardized test scores in Mississippi. This kind of success has continued, adding proof of the effectiveness of the Writing Project.

Last fall, the Academy for Educational Development completed a study which shows the improvement of student writing achievement as a result of their teachers' involvement in the National Writing Project. The study evaluated the writing skills of 583 third and fourth grade students. The executive summary of the study says, "Overall, these findings show that students in classrooms taught by NWP teachers made significant progress over the course of the school year in rhetorical effectiveness and applying writing convictions and persuasive writing. By the end of the school year, a majority of students in the study reached adequate or strong achievement in rhetorical effectiveness and demonstrated general or clear control over the convictions of usage, mechanics and spelling."

We are going to have to take a special course in learning how to understand the executive summary written by these experts, but I think what they are saying is the program works.

This hearing provides the U.S. Senate with an opportunity to learn more about the National Writing Project and how it is working in schools across our State and Nation. I am looking forward to hearing the testimony from our distinguished witnesses.

STATEMENT OF DR. RICHARD STERLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT, BERKELEY, CA

Senator COCHRAN. Our first panel today includes Dr. Richard Sterling, who is executive director of the National Writing Project, he is at the University of California in Berkeley; Dr. Sherry Swain, whom I mentioned in my opening statement, who is director of the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project in Starkville; and Dr. Huntley Biggs, who is at the Mississippi Power Foundation, and provides funding—the foundation does, for local projects in Gulf-

port. Let me welcome our first panel, and we have written statements which have been prepared for our hearing record, and they will be included in full in the record. And I would encourage you to make such comments or read from the statements as you think would be helpful to our hearing. Dr. Sterling, let us start with you.

Dr. STERLING. Thank you very much and thank you, Senator Cochran, for the opportunity to address this subcommittee. In your opening statement, you already mentioned some of the things I was going to say, so I will cut some of that. One of the things that we are thrilled about is that your support of the National Writing Project has had an enormous impact, not just within the State of Mississippi, but far beyond.

The basic mission of the Writing Project is to improve the teaching of writing and learning in the nation's schools. The National Writing Project is truly one of the nation's educational achievement success stories. It began in 1974, with one site, at the University of California, Berkeley, and is now, as you said earlier, at 167 sites across the country in 49 States. Everyone always wants to know what State is missing, and that is New Hampshire, but we have an inquiry from New Hampshire, and we are hopeful that they will have the writing project next year, and that will make all 50.

Each site operates from a university campus in collaboration with school districts in the immediate area surrounding them. Usually, the projects are directed by one university faculty member and one school teacher from the K–12 system. The leverage that they get is, in part, because each project is a kind of an entrepreneurial effort. It has to prove its success, and it has to sell its wares, so to speak, to the surrounding district. On average, as you said, $6 are raised for every dollar in the project. So if a project is not doing its work well, it does not survive. It has a very—in Mississippi, you will see the enormous success of the project, because they are almost overwhelmed with the amount of work they are being asked to do, and you will hear more about that later.

The Writing Project operates on a teachers teaching teachers model. We take the best teachers we can find, successful writing teachers, they attend invitational summer institutes at their local writing project sites, they conduct research, and they develop their own writing skills. These same teachers then share what they have learned with other teachers, providing professional development workshops in their own schools and communities. The results are remarkable. You have heard about this recent study with AED. That study was conducted in Mississippi, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and California. Next year, we are extending the project to Kentucky and two or three other States that have not yet been chosen. The evaluation looks very, very promising.

I have to tell you that in Mississippi, the Writing Project here has gone far beyond just things like that. There is a State network in Mississippi that is supported by the legislature, and it has become a model for other States. We are asking Dr. Swain to actually help us develop this model for other States across the country. So she has been working with small groups of writing projects in other States to help develop the network that will serve teachers in their States.

The Writing Project's teachers teaching teachers approach has become a national model, and the U.S. Department of Education has asked us to think about how this project might work in mathematics, in social sciences and in reading. And so we are beginning to look beyond just writing. Now, that, of course, has been true all along. Writing Project teachers teach reading, as well.

I think the need for writing is also something that we should bear in mind. Anyone looking for a job today can tell you, and probably many of you here in this room, that writing has become an essential skill in today's professional world. If you visit any internet site posting job descriptions, you constantly see phrases like strong writing skills required or must be able to think and write clearly or excellent writing and communication skills a must. Writing is one of the most pivotal skills to success in the workplace today, and yet, educators and academics commonly refer to it as the forgotten third R. We have heard enormous amounts about reading from the new Administration, but almost nothing about writing. Writing is a focal point of every State and school district's educational standard, and yet, the National Writing Project is the only national program that addresses the writing proficiencies by training teachers to teach writing.

Not only are National Writing Project sites proven to improve student achievement, they offer the ongoing professional support and sense of community that keeps teachers in education. This is a really important point. As you may know, we are losing about 50 percent of our teachers within 5 years of them entering the profession. We are collecting data to show that teachers who are in writing projects are much more likely to stay. The initial data looks very promising at around 70 percent, but we have not got confirmation of that yet. The national surveys indicate, we have another evaluation by In-Class Research Associates that indicates that over 95 percent of teachers who participate in our programs call the Writing Project the best in-service program they ever participated in. With studies showing that America will need to hire over 2 million teachers in the next 10 years, including 700,000 in high-poverty urban and rural districts, a minimum Federal investment in this program helps keep teachers in the profession and seems like a wise choice.

PREPARED STATEMENT

The National Writing Project is highly successful, cost effective and serves two important functions: improving student writing and thinking, and providing teachers with the professional support they need. Yet, the current ESEA reauthorization bill does not include funding for the National Writing Project, and the President's bill and request to Congress does not, either. I cannot overemphasize the importance of good writing and clear thinking. Today more than ever, these skills are vital for young people, they are vital for our changing economy, and they are vital to the future of democracy. I urge you to continue the support of the National Writing Project. Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD STERLING

Thank you very much for this opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the National Writing Project (NWP) to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. The National Writing Project is a highly successful, cost-effective program to improve the teaching of writing in the nation's schools. However, the current ESEA bill does not include the reauthorization of the National Writing Project.

Despite Washington's present focus on the importance of education, a lack of reading and writing skills continue to hinder individual and corporate success in the United States today.

—The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that poor reading and writing skills cost U.S. businesses about $225 billion a year in lost productivity. In a survey of more than 300 business executives, 71 percent reported that basic written communication training was critical to meeting changing workplace demands, yet only 26 percent of companies offered this kind of training (source: "Fact Sheet on Workforce Literacy," National Institute for Literacy).

—In a 1995 Opinion Research Corporation survey of Fortune 1000 CEOs, 82 percent of those surveyed said that state and local school systems have primary responsibility to boost workers' literacy rates (source: "Illiteracy at Work," Shelly Reese, American Demographics, 4/96).

—Being able to write effectively and clearly is an essential component of workplace success today, yet educators typically refer to writing as the "forgotten third R." Fifty-four percent of workers report that they frequently write reports on the job (source: "Literacy Practices in Today's Workplace," Larry Mikulecky, for the National Institute for Literacy). Visit any Internet site posting job descriptions and you constantly encounter phrases like "strong writing skills required" or "must have excellent writing and communication skills."

—In 1995, almost all public 2-year institutions had to offer remedial writing courses, while about three-quarters of public 4-year institutions offered remedial writing courses. About half of all private 4-year institutions offered remedial writing courses. Eighty-five percent of high minority enrollment colleges offered remedial writing (source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Remedial Education at Higher Education Institutions in Fall 1995).

Writing is a focal point of every state and school district's education standards. Yet the National Writing Project is the only national program that seeks to improve the teaching of writing through professional development for teachers, kindergarten through college. The project serves over 100,000 teachers annually through its network of 167 sites in 49 states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Sites operate from university campuses and collaborate with surrounding schools and districts. Local sites raise on average $6 in local funding for every $1 they receive from the federal government, making the National Writing Project one of the most cost-effective educational programs in the country.

The National Writing Project operates on a teachers-teaching-teachers model. Successful writing teachers attend invitational summer institutes at their local writing project sites to share best practices, conduct research and develop their own writing skills. These same teachers then share what they have learned with other teachers, providing professional development workshops in their own schools and communities.

If student achievement and success are to be the nation's focus, the National Writing Project should be at the top of every legislator's priority list. The results are outstanding.

Third and fourth grade students of writing project teachers in Mississippi, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and California, for example, showed significant improvement in writing achievement in a 1999–2000 Academy for Educational Development study. The evaluation of 583 students of writing project teachers found 96 percent of fourth graders and 85 percent of third graders reaching adequate or strong achievement in the demands of persuasive writing by their second writing assessment in spring 2000.

Students participating in the four-year Pathway project conducted by the UC Irvine Writing Project in the Santa Ana Unified School District showed significantly higher gains in writing achievement than their peers who did not participate in the project. Pathway students had fewer absences and higher grade point averages than their peers. 100 percent of Pathway students graduated from high school and more than 90 percent went on to post-secondary education. Santa Ana Unified's students are 68.6 percent limited English proficient, 98.5 percent ethnic minority, with 74.4 percent qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

The writing project's "teachers-teaching-teachers" approach has become a national model, used to improve teaching in other academic fields like math, science, and reading, and is recognized by the U.S. Dept. of Education as an important part of national education policy.

Not only are National Writing Project sites proven to improve student achievement, they offer the ongoing professional support and sense of community that keep teachers in education. Over 95 percent of teachers who participate in our program call writing project training the best inservice they have ever had. (source: "Client Satisfaction Survey," Inverness Research Associates, 2000). With studies showing America will need to hire over two million teachers in the next decade, including 700,000 in high-poverty urban and rural districts, a minimal federal investment in a program that helps keep teachers in the profession seems a wise choice.

The National Writing Project is a highly successful, cost-effective program serving two extremely important functions: improving student writing and learning and providing teachers with the professional support needed to keep them in the field. I urge the Senate to support the reauthorization of the National Writing Project in the current ESEA bill. Thank you.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Sterling. Now we will hear from Dr. Sherry Swain.

STATEMENT OF DR. SHERRY SWAIN, DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI WRITING AND THINKING PROJECT, STARKVILLE, MS

Dr. SWAIN. Thank you. And I want to thank you, Senator Cochran, for bringing us together in this beautiful place to talk about the work of the National Writing Project. As director of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute, which is our State network of eight National Writing Project sites, I am so proud of the impact that the National Writing Project has had on teachers and schools and students in our State, and I am also proud of the impact and the voice of Mississippi teachers that is played out within the national scene because of the National Writing Project.

The first NWP program for teachers in Mississippi was offered at Mississippi State University in 1985. We now have seven additional university sites at the University of Mississippi, the University of Southern Mississippi, Delta State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Jackson State University, and our new site on the Gulf Coast campus of USM.

Mississippi receives almost half a million dollars annually to work with our teachers, and that is used for stipends for teachers to participate in summer institutes, it is used for leadership development activities, there are conferences which showcase Mississippi classrooms, there are classroom research opportunities, teacher exchanges, special grants to address the needs of rural teachers and urban teachers, professional writing and publishing opportunities and opportunities to participate in special projects. I want to mention one of those right now called Rural Voices. Bay St. Louis is one of the participants in that.

At this very moment, teachers and students across this State are compiling their writing about the places where they have lived and sending it in for a collaborative effort between the National Writing Project and National Public Radio. These writings will be read by the authors on a CD that will be distributed nationally, so that the nation will get to hear what our students and teachers think about the places where they live. And there are some wonderful descriptions of the beaches at Bay St. Louis and a lot of tunnels, as the children call them when they cross over the highways. The Mis-

sissippi local sites and the statewide network, the institute, in turn, serve schools and teachers and districts within our State.

During fiscal year 2000, here are some of the things that happened here in Mississippi: There were 8 invitational summer institutes, 192 long-term programs for teachers. We served over 4,000 teachers in Mississippi, as we do every year. That translates into service to one out of every seven teachers in Mississippi. The average of those teachers, most of those teachers participate in 27.5 hours of professional development. So there is evidence there that we are not about one-shot, short-term professional development, but long-term professional development that makes a difference.

I want to talk about three studies that show the results of our quality programs. One of them I can pass talking about, Senator, because you already described it so beautifully, the JTPA project, which is found on page 5 in the profiles book, which is in the press packet. There is another study on page 10 of that book that shows that the accreditation levels and student achievement levels in both West Point School District and Kemper County rose after intensive participation with the Writing Project. Another statistic that we are quite proud of is that Mississippi is among the top five States in the nation in the number of national board certified teachers. Our own research shows that here in Mississippi when National Writing Project teachers attempt to pass the national boards, they pass at a rate of 77 percent. That is opposed to a rate of 47 percent for teachers who have not had National Writing Project experience.

One of the ways we serve in our State is to develop partnerships with other agencies who are also charged with improving teaching and learning in our State. We've done a great deal of work with the Mississippi Department of Education. In 1993, the Writing Project in Mississippi introduced teachers across our State to the idea of performance assessment. That was a very successful program. In 1996, we developed the reading and the language arts framework, which was presented across our State to help teachers deal with the new language arts and reading standards.

The reading and the language arts program was presented to all the first grade teachers in the six school districts that were a part of the Mississippi reading sufficiency report between the pre- and post-test dates. So we feel like we can take a little bit of the credit for the success mentioned in that report. Currently, we are presenting a program called Score, which helps secondary content area teachers learn to teach reading within the context of their content areas. Our partnership with PREPS, which is a consortium of researchers that evaluates public schools, led to an integrative assessment program and subject area program that addressed the needs of teachers and students in these days of high-stakes exit exams. We are currently working on Project Think Tank with PREPS, which will provide on-line support for teachers and the improvement of writing for their students. Our partnerships with schools are characterized by multi-year work, work with various groups within the school and work that is tailored to the specific needs of the school.

We are proud that Bay-Waveland is one of our partnership schools, and we will hear more about what is going on there later.

We also look forward to working with them in our writing improvement plan next year. I just want to say for just a second here how proud we are of this Bay-Waveland School District. They are on the cutting edge of classroom instruction. On assessment, they allow their students to be an integral part of the assessment process. The students keep their own portfolios, they reflect on their own learning, they set goals for their own learning, and then there is a structure in place where they share that with their parents. I think that they deserve a lot of credit for that, and I certainly felt that we have been honored to be able to come here and work with this district.

PREPARED STATEMENT

Beyond that, I just want to say it is also an honor to be even involved with the National Writing Project. And as a representative of all the teacher consultants across the nation, I just want to say thank you for the support, and thank you especially from Mississippi teachers, because without this National Writing Project in our State, our forum for getting our message outside the boundaries of our State would be lost, and our voices would not be nearly so strong. Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SHERRY SWAIN

As Director of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute (MWTI), our state network of National Writing Project (NWP) sites, I am proud of the impact of the National Writing Project on teachers, students, and schools in Mississippi. Our first NWP program for teachers was offered in 1985 at Mississippi State University. Since that time, we have established the state network known as the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute, also housed at Mississippi State University. The Institute now includes eight university-based NWP sites that serve public schools. Those sites are located at Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi, the University of Southern Mississippi, Delta State University, Alcorn State University, Mississippi Valley State University, Jackson State University. Our newest site, founded this year, is located on the Gulf Park Campus of the University of Southern Mississippi.

Mississippi benefits directly from the $10 million federal appropriation to the NWP. Consider the benefits to Mississippi teachers in just one year. The NWP direct grants to Mississippi's university-based sites total more than $200,000. The bulk of these funds go into stipends for Mississippi teachers to participate in an intensive summer program on the teaching of writing. Additional funds of approximately $200,000 allow Mississippi teachers to participate in leadership development activities, conferences which showcase Mississippi classrooms, classroom research opportunities, teacher exchanges, special grants for addressing needs of rural and urban teachers, professional writing and publishing opportunities, and opportunities to participate in special projects-some of which are described in this document.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi, the local sites as well as the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute, in turn, serve teachers, students, schools, and school districts within the state. During the 1999–2000 school year, service included the following:

—Eight Invitational Summer Institutes at eight university sites afforded 6 hours of graduate credit to master teachers as they learned how to become better teachers of writing, to use writing as a learning tool for all subject areas, and to become teachers of teachers.

—One hundred ninety-two (192) programs for teachers were conducted throughout the state, indicating that the NWP sites within Mississippi have the capacity to serve every one of the 150 school districts in the state with at least one year-long professional development program.

—Approximately 110,000 contact hours of professional development were provided to teachers in Mississippi public schools. The average teacher participated in

27.5 contact hours, evidence that teachers involved in our programs receive intensive, high-quality professional development over time.

—Over 4000 Mississippi teachers participated in NWP professional development programs. In other words, one out of every seven Mississippi teachers directly benefited from National Writing Project programs in a single year.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi is a cost-effective program. The cost per contact hour in federal dollars in Mississippi in fiscal year 2000 was $1.06. For every federal dollar awarded to NWP sites in Mississippi, another $7.70 was leveraged from other sources, including the state, school districts, and private foundations. The cost per contact hour in state dollars was $3.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi offers quality programs that make a difference in teaching and learning:

—In a study of Mississippi at-risk high school students, their teachers were provided an eight-week curriculum developed by the MWTI along with intensive professional development on teaching strategies. Results showed that the students involved in the summer program gained 1.9 years in mathematics achievement and 1.7 years in reading achievement over the eight-week period. (Profiles of the National Writing Project, p. 5)

—Research shows that the NWP in Mississippi has a positive effect on accreditation. Studies conducted in West Point and in Kemper County show that student achievement and district accreditation rose after intensive work with the Mississippi network of NWP sites. (Profiles of the National Writing Project, p. 10)

—Of the Mississippi teachers applying for National Board Certification, those who have participated in NWP intensive Summer Institutes pass at the rate of 77 percent. Those participating in our professional development programs pass at a rate of 59 percent. Those not participating in NWP programs pass at a rate of 47 percent—a 30-point difference for NWP teachers.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi sponsors research opportunities and special projects for teachers and students:

—The MWTI sites at Alcorn State University and at Mississippi State University were part of a three-year Project Outreach initiative, sponsored by the NWP and the DeWitt Wallace Foundation. The project focused on equal access to NWP programs.

—A team of Mississippi third and fourth-grade teachers is currently involved in a three-year study with the National Writing Project and the Academy for Educational Development. Students write to prompts; their writing is then scored for rhetorical effectiveness and conventions. Teachers involved in the study submit lesson plans to be scored for construction of knowledge, content area concepts, and connections to students' lives.

—Mississippi teachers, including a team from the Bay/Waveland School District, have presented at three international Global Conferences on Language and Learning, held in Oxford, England, Bordeaux, France, and Utrecht, Holland.

—Mississippi teachers and students are being featured in the second edition of Rural Voices Country Schools, a project of the NWP and National Public Radio (NPR). This collection of teachers and students reading their writing about the places they live will be aired nationally over NPR stations.

The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute enters into partnerships with other agencies seeking to improve teaching and learning. The MWTI has a long history of service to the Mississippi Department of Education, beginning with the 1987 JTPA program mentioned above which resulted in dramatic increases in reading and math achievement for at-risk high school students. Other programs developed and conducted for the department include the following:

—In 1993, the MWTI prepared teachers across the state for the first performance assessments that focused on national standards in the Mississippi Assessment System Professional Development.

—In 1995, the MWTI developed and led two additional programs for groups of K–3, 4–8, and 9–12 teachers of language arts and reading: Introducing the Language Arts Framework and Building Communities of Readers.

—In 1996, Reading and the Language Arts Framework was designed to help teachers make the transition from skills-based instruction to student-centered instruction. The program was presented to first-grade teachers in all six districts featured in the Reading Sufficiency Report between the pre and post test dates.

—Science With Integrated Math Methods Encouraging Reading was developed to assist elementary teachers in meeting the math and science standards using hands-on experiences.

—SCORE, Secondary Content Opening to Reading Excellence, developed in 1998, helps teams of content area teachers and their administrators understand how

reading skills can be integrated into secondary science, social studies, and mathematics classrooms.

Partnership with the PREPS Consortium of school districts has resulted in three research-based programs to meet the needs of school districts:

—Integrated Assessment for teachers of grades K–9 focuses on the ideal connections between good teaching and good assessments.

—Subject Area Programs for Biology, Algebra I, American History, and English II provide teachers with curriculum units and teaching strategies to help students achieve on the high stakes high school exit exams.

—Project Think Tank is now being developed to provide teachers with on-line support as they learn to use writing prompts and scoring guides with their students.

Partnerships with schools are characterized by multi-year work, programs for various groups within the school, and work that is tailored to fit the specific needs of the school. The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute and Bay/Waveland partnership began a number of years ago with teachers participating in Invitational Summer Programs and in our Portfolios for Assessment and Learning Program. Teams of teachers from Bay/Waveland have also participated in our WONDER retreats for K–2 teachers and have presented their portfolio research at national, regional, and international conferences. For the past two years, a team of Teacher Consultants has spent a week each month working side-by-side with teachers and students in three elementary schools. In all-day interactive workshops, teachers focus on helping students to reflect on their own learning while they reflect on their own teaching practices. Other components of the work include demonstration lessons in classrooms, study groups, one-on-one conferences with teachers, and parent workshops. We look forward to next year when Bay/Waveland will be one of the pilot sites for our new K–12 Writing Improvement Plan.

We are proud of the accomplishments of the Bay/Waveland education community. They have developed a teaching/learning/reporting process that honors the individual child and at the same time, insures that national standards are being met. This district offers multi-age classrooms, a portfolio process that involves parents and insures that students learn to evaluate and set goals for their own learning, and an innovative reporting process that highlights the professional expertise of teachers while giving parents and students bountiful information about what each child knows and is able to do.

CONCLUSION

It is my exquisite good fortune to be associated with the only national effort to improve student writing-The National Writing Project, with informed school administrators such as Kim Stasny and Debbie Cox of the Bay/Waveland School District, and with Mississippi's wonderfully diverse teachers and students. As a representative of the Teacher Consultants of the National Writing Project, I extend our deepest gratitude to Senator Cochran and to all members of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education for this opportunity to inform the United States Congress about our work in the nation's schools.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Swain. Dr. Huntley Biggs.

STATEMENT OF DR. HUNTLEY BIGGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI POWER FOUNDATION

Dr. BIGGS. Thank you, Senator. As I was introduced, I am the executive director of Mississippi Power Education Foundation, and we have been in the business of providing grants to support education in southeast Mississippi since 1984. And over a period since our inception, we have made grants totaling about $2.7 million.

We are here today to talk about the National Writing Project and the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute. Today, businesses face an increasingly difficult challenge of hiring workers that meet even minimal employment criteria. The Southern Company, where I work, employs about 25,000 people across the United States. In our service system, we are finding that only about 25 to 30 percent of our applicants for hourly jobs can pass an initial employment screening test. That test is designed to evaluate the individual's

thinking ability rather than technical skills, and an eighth grade student, with minimal reading and mathematical ability, should be able to pass that test. However, unfortunately, 70 to 75 percent cannot.

It is also becoming very difficult to recruit professional level people, as well, and this is because there are a declining number of people enrolled in demanding academic fields such as engineering and computer sciences. Our high schools are just not producing enough people who are qualified to pursue degrees in these fields, and yet, we as business people must meet the demands of global competition, which requires productive employees who can function effectively in the information age. Unfortunately, we are not getting them. The experience of the Southern Company, I feel, is no different than that for other employers.

Well, that is the bad news, but there is good news. Business needs employees who are literate in language arts and math, who can think and solve problems and who can behave ethically. Writing is a basic literacy skill, and there is also a clear connection between writing and thinking. When writing is emphasized in school, students will develop their abilities to think, which is an essential workplace skill. That is why we believe that the National Writing Project and the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute are so important to creating a qualified and productive workforce.

Over the past several years, emphasis has been placed on raising academic standards for student achievement. Research shows that teachers can make the critical difference in whether or not a student succeeds. Across the nation today, there is an increasing emphasis on the quality of teaching. Earlier this year, for example, the National Alliance for Business launched a year-long campaign calling for improvements in teaching quality. A centerpiece of its recommendations is a new model of teacher preparation and professional development. And recently, the Mississippi Public Education Forum formed a task force to address the issues relating to teaching quality in our State.

I bring this to your attention because the professional development delivered by the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute is a model of what professional development should be. The training courses it offers are not one-shot sit-and-get sessions offered by experts who are far removed from the classroom. Rather, the instruction takes place over time, allows for follow-up and an opportunity to try out new practices. This helps insure that what is learned during the training is implemented in the classroom, and that is in sharp contrast to most staff development, not here in Bay-Waveland, however, but in other places which is focused on generating hours of credit rather than on improving classroom teaching.

The Writing Project instructors are teacher consultants or classroom teachers. They know by their own experience what works and what does not. Consequently, the training programs offered by the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute are highly credible in the eyes of teachers. By taking on the role of consultant, the teachers not only develop other people but also develop themselves professionally and personally. They have the opportunity to interact with other teachers and share best practices. They can compare notes and learn new ways of doing things in their classrooms. Time and

again I hear that teachers who have served as teacher consultants find themselves to be better teachers themselves.

The National Writing Project model emphasizes reflective writing and portfolios. Teachers who have been through the Writing and Thinking Institute programs are well prepared to take the national board certification process. Mississippi boasts 755 board certified teachers; many of these master teachers are products of the Mississippi Writing Project.

We at Mississippi Power Education Foundation commend those who have seen the importance of writing and have taken steps to infuse writing throughout the curriculum. Thanks to Senator Thad Cochran, the Writing Project has become federally funded, and we want to thank you personally, sir, for your efforts in the past and encourage you to continue to be the national champion for writing in our schools throughout the country.

I also want to acknowledge the funding provided to Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute by the Mississippi Legislature through its appropriations process. These are great investments in education and need to be continued, if not increased.

The Mississippi Power Education Board of Directors recognizes the critical importance of infusing writing throughout the K–12 curriculum. And over the past several years, we have awarded a number of grants to support writing initiatives that are connected with the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute. This investment totals about $50,000. We help to fund summer institutes to train teacher consultants. Several school districts have received grants from our foundation to provide professional development for teachers on how to teach writing across the curriculum. We have found these programs to be of excellent quality and extremely cost effective, and that cost effectiveness is due in part to the public funding that has been received from the Federal and State levels.

We have also supported the Writing and Thinking Institute's statewide strategic plan for writing improvements by raising awareness of it among potential private donors. We are among other private foundations such as the Phil Hardon Foundation and the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation, who also have provided donations to support writing initiatives in schools throughout Mississippi under the auspices of the Writing and Thinking Institute.

PREPARED STATEMENT

Much of the credit, of course, goes to the leadership provided by Dr. Sherry Swain, who is the director of the institute. Her reputation as a leading expert on writing extends far beyond the borders of Mississippi, as evidenced by her participation in conferences here and abroad. As a result, people from across our country and overseas are aware of the quality writing programs that we have in Mississippi. We are most fortunate to have Dr. Swain leading the National Writing Project in Mississippi.

Thank you very much for inviting me to offer these comments. I must say that the Writing Project in Mississippi is truly a bright spot on the education landscape of Mississippi.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HUNTLEY BIGGS

My name is Huntley Biggs and I am the Executive Director of the Mississippi Power Education Foundation. The Education Foundation was established in 1984 to provide grants in support of education in grades K–12 in southeast Mississippi. Since inception it has made grants totaling $2.7 million. It is my pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the Mississippi Power Education Foundation regarding the National Writing Project and the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute.

Various national public opinion surveys indicate that the most significant threat to the future of this country is the decline in our education system. Today businesses face the increasingly difficult challenge of hiring workers who can meet even minimal employment criteria. Mississippi Power Company is a subsidiary of the Southern Company which provides electricity to customers throughout most of Alabama, Georgia, about one-third of Mississippi, and the panhandle of Florida. The Southern Company employs about 25,000 people in its U.S. operations. Across the Southern Company system, we are finding that 70–75 percent of the applicants for hourly jobs cannot pass the initial screening test. The test is designed to evaluate the individual's thinking ability rather than his/her technical skills. An 8th grade student with minimal reading and mathematical abilities should be able to pass the test.

Recruiting professional people is also a challenge. It is very difficult to find people with engineering and information technology degrees because the universities are experiencing declining enrollments in these demanding academic fields. Those who are available often have received their basic K–12 education outside of the United States. U.S. schools are just not producing enough people who are qualified to pursue degrees in these technical fields. Global competition demands that businesses have productive employees who can function effectively in the Information Age. Unfortunately, we are not getting them. The experience of the Southern Company is no different than that of other employers.

In a nutshell, business needs employees who are literate in language arts and math, who can think and solve problems, and who will behave ethically. Writing is a basic literacy skill. But there is also a clear connection between writing and thinking. Succinct writing is the product of analysis, evaluation, and reflection, each of which requires thinking. When writing is emphasized in school, students will develop their abilities to think, an essential workplace skill. That is why we believe that the National Writing Project and the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute are so important to creating a qualified and productive workforce.

Over the past several years, emphasis has been placed on raising educational standards for student achievement. Research shows that teachers can make the critical difference in whether or not a student succeeds. If we expect students to learn and perform to high standards, it is critical that teachers are able to teach to high standards. Across the nation today, there is increasing emphasis on the quality of teaching. Earlier this year, the National Alliance for Business launched a year-long campaign calling for improvements in teaching quality. A centerpiece of its recommendations is a new model of teacher preparation and professional development.

At the heart of the National Writing Project in Mississippi is the professional development of teachers. By leveraging a relatively modest amount of federal and state monies, the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute offered 109,000 hours of professional development to over 4,000 teachers in fiscal year 2000. This equates to $1.16 per contact hour of federal funds and $3.01 per hour of state funds. The total cost including both public and private monies is about $9.25 per hour. This is an impressive record. It attests to a very cost-effective model for providing top quality professional development to teachers.

The professional development delivered by the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute is a model of what professional development should be. The training courses it offers are not one shot, sit-and-get sessions offered by experts who are far removed from the classroom. Rather, the instruction takes place over a period of time allowing teachers to try out the new practices in their classrooms. The sessions include time for follow-up and review of results since the last meeting. This helps to ensure that what is learned during the training is implemented in the classroom. This is in sharp contrast to most staff development which is focused on generating hours of credit, rather than on improving classroom teaching.

The writing project instructors or teacher consultants are classroom teachers that know by their own experience what works and what does not. The consultants themselves are also practitioners in their own classrooms of techniques that they are teaching. Consequently, the programs and work of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute are highly credible in the eyes of teachers. The consultants are well prepared to offer the instruction as a result of participating in intensive sum-

mer institutes offered through the writing project's regional affiliates located on eight university campuses. They are also observed and coached by staff of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute.

By taking on the role of a writing project consultant, teachers also develop themselves professionally. They have the opportunity to interact with other teachers and share best practices. They can compare notes and learn new ways of doing things in their classrooms. Time and again teachers report that they are better teachers themselves as a result of having been a teacher consultant.

The National Writing Project model emphasizes reflective writing and portfolios. Teachers who have been through the Mississippi Writing/Thinking programs and institutes are well prepared to participate in the National Board certification process, part of which requires written self-assessment of teaching practices and the development of portfolios. Mississippi boasts having 755 Board certified teachers, the fifth largest number of any state in the United States. Many of these master teachers are products of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute's professional development experiences.

The Mississippi statewide testing program has a writing exercise on the fourth, seventh, and tenth grade examinations. Since the teaching of writing is rarely offered as a part of the curriculum in the teacher preparation degree programs, there has emerged a growing demand for professional development programs that can provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for teaching writing. The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute is working diligently to meet that need and is worthy of additional funding to meet that challenge.

We at the Mississippi Power Education Foundation commend those who have seen the importance of writing and have taken the steps to infuse writing throughout the curriculum. Thanks to Senator Thad Cochran, the National Writing Project became a federally funded program. Through his leadership in the Senate, federal funding continues to grow in support of regional activities such as the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute.

The Board of Directors of the Mississippi Power Education Foundation recognizes the critical importance of infusing writing throughout the K–12 curriculum. Over the past several years the Mississippi Power Education Foundation has funded a number of writing initiatives that have been fallen under the auspices of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute. This investment totals about $50,000. We helped to fund summer institutes to train teacher consultants at the South Mississippi Writing Program at the University of Southern Mississippi. Several school districts received grants from our foundation to contract with the Thinking/Writing Institute to provide professional development for teachers in how teach writing across the entire curriculum. We have found that these programs are of excellent quality and compared to other vendors the costs are very reasonable due in part to the financial support from federal and state sources. We have also been supportive of the Writing/Thinking Institute's Statewide Strategic Plan for Writing Improvement by raising the awareness of it among potential donors. We are also giving consideration to a grant request to fund a pilot project under that Plan.

Much of the credit for the success of these programs is due to the leadership provided by Dr. Sherry Swain, the Director of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute. Her reputation as a leading expert on writing extends far beyond the borders of Mississippi as evidenced by her participation in conferences and boards both in the United States and abroad. As a result, people from across the country and overseas are aware of the quality writing program that we offer in Mississippi. We are most fortunate to have Dr. Swain leading the National Writing Project in Mississippi.

Thank you for allowing me to offer these comments the National Writing Project which is a truly bright spot on Mississippi's educational landscape.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you, Dr. Biggs. I neglected to describe the background and qualifications of this first panel of witnesses, and before I do anything else, I am going to let you know that not only is Dr. Biggs the executive director of the Mississippi Power Company's Education Foundation, he is also manager of education services at Mississippi Power Company in Gulfport. And prior to that, he was manager of economic analysis at the Mississippi Research and Development Center in Jackson. Also, from 1977 to 1981, he was the State economist of Mississippi. He holds a doctorate degree in economics from Vanderbilt University, a master's

degree in Latin American Studies from Louisiana State University and a bachelor's degree from Washington and Lee University.

Also, I should have pointed out that Dr. Sherry Swain is director, as you have now heard described by the panel, of the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute, which is located on the campus of Mississippi State University. She was named top researcher at Mississippi State University. She designs professional development and secures funding so that teachers can develop expertise in writing, performance assessment and standards-based education. She serves on the task force for the National Writing Project and is the State Network Chair. She recently served as a language arts consultant through the Department of Defense dependent schools, elaborating on the design of a standards-based professional development program to be offered at military bases around the world. She co-chaired the Global Conversations on Language and Literacy Conference held in Holland in August of the year 2000. She is the author of several articles on teaching and professional development, as well as the book entitled "I Can Write What's On My Mind: Theresa Finds Her Voice," published by the National Writing Project in 1994.

And Dr. Richard Sterling is executive director of the National Writing Project, with headquarters in Berkeley, California. He is an adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education at that university. Formerly, he was the director and the founder of the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College, part of the City University of New York. He was also founder of the New York City Writing Project and the New York City Mathematics Project. He has published "Charting Educational Reform," in 1992, and the "Urban Sites Writing Network, Hard Talk Among Urban Educators," in 1994. He is currently working on a 4-year study of school reform projects.

So as you can see, we have an illustrious and well qualified panel to begin today's hearings, and we are very grateful for your participation and your assistance to our Committee on Appropriations.

Let me also observe that Dr. Swain's comment about the Rural Voices Program is another indication of the leadership being provided here in Mississippi for this Writing Project's program. It is good to hear about things that we are taking the lead on, from the authorization and funding of this project at the Federal level to the role model that Mississippi is in the administration and the conduct of this writing program. We often hear our State criticized for low scores in this or that or not being up to speed in some other categories, but this is an area where I think we can take a great deal of pride in the people of the State of Mississippi who are actually leading the way to helping show how students can learn better and teachers can be trained more effectively in the teaching of writing and other subjects through the use of this program.

Dr. Biggs, let me ask you a question just as a matter of curiosity. Mississippi Power Education Foundation provides grants to this program to help pay the way, and you mentioned some other foundations and private interests who contribute to this program. How do you go about deciding how you spend your resources at the Mississippi Power Education Foundation? I know you have a lot of requests, you cannot respond to all of them, and so what is the proc-

ess and how did you happen to select this program and persuade the powers to be—or maybe you are it—to actually make a contribution to this program?

Dr. BIGGS. If I were it, I would have given a lot more than $50,000. We do our grant making by process of proposal. So we take written proposals from applicants. Areas that we have been emphasizing recently include professional development, parental involvement, technology and strategic planning. And we feel that professional development is a key to improving the quality of teaching. Teacher preparation is another aspect that is so important to teaching quality, but when you think about the number of people who are in the workforce presently that we need to help to become better teachers, professional development is the way to go. And we feel that the model that is provided by the National Writing Project, that of teachers teaching teachers, is one that we ought to be pursuing whenever we provide for effective professional development. So our foundation feels that professional development is a high priority, and this particular project does an outstanding, excellent job in that regard, so that was a lot of our thinking.

Senator COCHRAN. Dr. Sterling, in determining how you have put together the resources over time that carry out the work of this program, about how much of the funding you receive comes from private sources as compared to State and Federal or public funds?

Dr. STERLING. Well, because of the leverage that the project exerts, I would say that six to one is about the right amount, but locally, sometimes it is much more than that. There are some projects now that are 1 million, 1.2 million, and there are some that are barely the match that is required by the Federal law, which is 1 to 1. The average of six does not tell you the whole story. There are some small rural projects that raise money from local foundations, small banks, some even do bake sales. I mean, there is a whole variety of activities that go on. Parents raise money in some small communities. In others, like New York City, for example, where it is the main professional development for writing in that city, and there are 60,000 teachers in New York City, so it is a huge program.

I think that the important thing to remember is that each site is autonomous. And so you remember the adage about everything in real estate being "location, location, location," well, in education, everything is "context, context, context," and it is different in every place, so that the writing project at Jackson State looks very different from the one at UCLA, and it should. And the way they raise money locally is also just as different. In some places, where there are many foundations, it is a little easier. In other places, it is extremely difficult.

Senator COCHRAN. You mentioned that you observed that there was no authorization requested by the administration in its proposed new education program or funding specifically for the National Writing Project. It was not until just the last couple of years that we were able to convince any administration to support the National Writing Project in terms of Federal funding. We are happy we finally did get recognition of the importance of the program in the last administration. But we also noticed, and I am encouraged, that the Department of Education is funded in the Presi-

dent's budget at a much higher level in comparison to last year's funding of any department in Government, an 11 percent increase in that department is provided in President Bush's budget proposal. I am hopeful that the flexibility that he has talked about can also include the flexibility to include funds for other programs that are proven to be very effective, such as the National Writing Project. And I am hopeful that we can get that done in the budget that has just recently been passed by the Congress.

We have a response that we have to make under the law after the President submits his budget request to Congress. The House and then the Senate separately adopt resolutions setting forth spending priorities of the legislative bodies, and then they get together and try to resolve differences and adopt a congressional budget resolution. We are in the process of that right now, as everyone probably knows. And when we go back next week into session, we will take up that issue, at least the conferees will, to try to resolve differences between the two houses.

Then the next order of business is the legislation for reauthorizing Federal education programs. And that is why I thought it was so timely for us to consider this program right now and to get some information together as to how it has worked, and how successful and important it has been in the effort to improve the quality of teaching and also the success of learning in our schools across the country.

I am curious to know, and I think this is a good thing to put on the record, Dr. Swain, how you came to be involved in this. You said you were a first grade teacher at some point, and you had an opportunity to participate in this program as a teacher learning from the program. Could you tell us more about that and how you translated that experience into the Writing and Thinking Institute of Mississippi State University, or how that came to be?

Dr. SWAIN. Sandra Burkett founded the Writing Project at Mississippi State in 1984 and 1985. I attended a meeting where she was talking about this wonderful experience for the summer, and I gathered up my student samples, and I went to be interviewed, because it is a selective process. And I remember asking her whether or not she would consider an elementary school teacher, and her telling me that if I were accepted, I would probably be the only one in the room, which turned out to be almost true. But I stayed very quiet, convinced that if they found out how little I really knew about writing, they would ask me to leave, so I tried to be very quiet and learn everything I could before that day came.

I was also quite determined that everything we looked at, all the process kinds of instructions, the idea that you do not get it right the first time, the idea that writing happens over time and change happens over time, and that a teacher has to write with her students, it all made sense, and it made sense to me as a first grade teacher, just as it made sense to those teaching freshman English in college.

And I went back with a plan for a research project to see if it made a difference. And I used two measures, one was the Peabody picture vocabulary test, and a standard vocabulary test, and I had a control group, and I took part in Writing Project teaching all that year, and I had a control group down the hall. At the end of the

year, the vocabulary of my first graders, who had simply engaged in writing every day, had advanced double of those of my counterpart down the hall. She had taught the same books, the same program, but without the writing every day. And I was just totally hooked. I come from a family of researchers, as you know, and I was just totally hooked. So every time I was invited to do something, I simply said yes, and so here I am. I never said no.

Senator COCHRAN. That is a wonderful story, and the Writing and Thinking Institute of Mississippi State has grown considerably since that first experience that you had, what, in 1985? Were you among the first?

Dr. SWAIN. I was in the first group.

Senator COCHRAN. You were in the first one.

Dr. SWAIN. We did 11 that first year out of the writing project. I now know that it's unheard of, but at the time it seemed natural. There were 20 of us, and we had contracted that summer, Sandra had, Dr. Burkett, with 11 school districts, for a series of 10 sessions each. There were only 20 of us to do that work, and we had to get out of our classrooms to go do it. We did a phenomenal amount of work for a little band of 20 pioneers, and it has grown.

Senator COCHRAN. How much money did you make?

Dr. SWAIN. Enough to buy a good bottle of perfume.

Senator COCHRAN. I do not know how much that is. Well, this has been a very successful start to this hearing, hearing about the project. I know I can ask a lot more questions. We have another panel of witnesses to come before us, but let me ask Dr. Sterling if he could sum up the experience that he has had in bringing teachers to Washington.

Each year I look forward to hearing and seeing all of you gather in the Capitol to remind us of the importance of the program. How effective is that contact with the Congress, and how effective has it been over the years in building support for the program?

Dr. STERLING. That is a good question to ask me, because I have been in this country over 35 years, and one of the things I never lose my sense of wonder about is that when we bring teachers to Washington, many of them have not been before, or they were there when they were in high school, their senior trip, and they are astounded at how well their representatives and their senators and their staff listen to them. The stories they tell when they come back after that day, I wish we had them on tape, they are just extraordinary. And the openness and the receptivity of staff who are often harassed and tired and have been working long, long hours, and yet, almost without exception, they are treated gracefully, and they are made to feel part of a process that is really important.

I would say it is one of the most effective things we do. We certainly pick up a lot of support from congressmen and from senators. And the experience for teachers, though, is in making them feel part of something much larger, and that is education policy.

One of the wonderful things that happened when we started bringing teachers together from different parts of the country is that it broadens their whole look at education. They came together, one project in particular had 10 teachers from 10 different cities, and they came with their complaints about their superintendent, about the mayor, about the school, and when they started talking

to each other, they heard the same stories of problems, and all of a sudden, they realized that the issues were much deeper and much more interesting than blaming an official or blaming somebody who is the principal of their school. And that work of bringing them together also broadened their whole notion about education, and that problems that are happening in L.A. are also true in Chicago and Baltimore and New York. And that made them start to look at education in a new way.

Similarly, when they go to Washington, they feel they have something to say, they feel they have something to communicate. I think that many of the staffers that I see year after year will tell you about a specific teacher that came and said this project is important, this has changed my teaching, I am now staying in teaching, and it is those stories that I think make an enormous difference.

Senator COCHRAN. I can agree with you wholeheartedly on that last point, as well. I remember reading letters that were sent to me by teachers in Mississippi who had an opportunity to take advantage of the program, attend the workshops and learn from it and then to write how it had affected their teaching, much as Dr. Swain talked about her experience with her class. There is something unique, personal and very honest about that kind of assessment from a teacher who is not trying to impress anybody in particular or do anything that would benefit herself or himself, but yet, they are simply honestly communicating an impression that a program has made upon them and their students. So I have been moved by the testimonies that I have seen in letters, phone calls, and personal encounters, in the meetings that you have organized each year.

Well, I am very hopeful that we can continue to reauthorize and program funds for the National Writing Project. Your testimony today certainly supports the notion that this is a very worthwhile and important investment of federal funds. Thank you very much for being our Panel No. 1 today at the hearing. Before we invite and introduce our Second Panel, let me note that we appreciate the attendance of everyone here today, and we have had representatives of some of the news organizations of the area. We also have a student group of reporters who are covering the hearing, and they are located at the round table over there, there we are, 6 or 7 students. You all be sure to get it right, it is C-O-C-H-R-A-N.

Panel 2: Dr. Kim Stasny, Superintendent of Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District; Stacey Gorum, Teacher at North Bay Elementary School; Sharon Ladner, Curriculum Instruction Specialist with Pascagoula School District; and Lisa Eveleigh, Public Relations Officer for the North Bay Elementary Parent Teacher Organization and parent of Helen Eveleigh, a second grade student at North Bay Elementary School.

Thank you very much. Let me invite our Second Panel to come forward now, and I will introduce them as they are coming to the table. Dr. Kim Myrick Stasny, is the Superintendent of Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District, where she has served since 1990. She was an Elementary Principal for 6 years, Assistant Superintendent for three, and has been Superintendent for the past 2 years. Prior to becoming an Administrator, Dr. Stasny taught for

7 years. She earned her Doctorate from the University of New Orleans, Master's Degree from the University of Southern Mississippi, and a Bachelor's Degree from Millsaps College. Dr. Stasny, was named Fifth Congressional District Administrator of the year in 1995, and was awarded the Richard D. Miller Scholarship of American Association of School Administrators during her doctoral work. She served as a board member for Mississippi Professional Educators, co-chair for Gulf Coast Education Improvement Consortium and President of Mississippi Association of Elementary School Administrators, District 9. She also belongs to several national education organizations.

Stacey Gorum, has been teaching at North Bay Elementary School for the past 5 years. She is a 1996 graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, and has been a writing project teacher since 1997. In August 2000, Ms. Gorum, made a professional presentation at the Fourth International Conference on Literacy, held in the Netherlands.

Sharon McKenna Ladner, has 26 years of experience as a Secondary Language Arts Teacher. She currently serves as a Curriculum Instruction Specialist with the Pascagoula School District. She is an active member in teacher consulting of the South Mississippi Writing Project and the newly chartered Live Oak Writing Project at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast. Ms. Ladner, is a recipient of the 1998 Milken National Educator Award, the 1998 United States-Russia Awards for Excellence in Teaching English and American Studies, and the DeWitt-Wallace Reader's Digest Graduate Fellowship to the Bread Loaf School of English. She holds a Master's of Arts in English from Bread Loaf's Lincoln College Campus, in Oxford, England. Ms. Ladner, is also a Mississippi Teacher of the Year finalist, an Alan R. Barton Excellence in Teaching Award recipient, and a National Board Certified Teacher in Adolescent and Young Adult English Language Arts. Ms. Ladner, is currently enrolled in a doctoral program in Educational Leadership at Nova Southeastern University in Florida.

Ms. Lisa Eveleigh, is an Editor for Southern Cultures, a University of North Carolina Journal. She is the Public Relations Officer for the North Bay Elementary Parent Teacher Organization. She and her husband are the parents of Helen, a second grade student at North Bay Elementary School.

We have copies of statements from witnesses on Panel 2, and I will point out that we will include those written statements into the record in full, and we encourage you to make whatever oral statements or comments you think would be helpful to our hearing. Let us start with Dr. Stasny, Superintendent of Bay St. Louis-Waveland School District.

STATEMENT OF KIM MYRICK STASNY, Ph.D., SUPERINTENDENT, BAY ST. LOUIS-WAVELAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. STASNY. Thank you, Senator Cochran. I would like to reiterate that we are delighted to have you in our district today, and it is a pleasure to host this Senate hearing for you. Ten years ago, which takes us back a few years, I had a teacher who was selected to participate in a summer institute at USM. And neither of us knew very much about the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Insti-

tute, and we decided that it would be a worthwhile experience. So the teacher went to the summer institute and participated. She returned for the new school year absolutely invigorated to implement the new philosophy that she had now embraced. And then in the fall of that same year, she was invited to be a part of the Portfolio Assessment Task Force that was formed representing the whole State of Mississippi, and it was sponsored by the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project. That was such an honor for us to have a teacher on that task force, and what an impact it has made in our district.

Knowing that many children lose their interest in school by the time they reach third grade and then add to the dropout rate by the time they reach ninth grade, we decided at the lower elementary, K through 3, to do something about it during the early years, during their formative years. So the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute has assisted us diligently in implementing a nongraded assessment system in kindergarten through third grade. By focusing on learning just for the sake of learning in a noncompetitive environment, all children, and I would like to reemphasize all children, are given the opportunity to gain the critical skills without losing their enthusiasm for learning.

However, my feet are grounded in reality, and I understand all too clearly that test scores are used, or should I say misused, to measure an individual's worth. But our test scores in grades four through nine have improved dramatically over the past five years. However, the most staggering statistics that we have in our district are found in the fourth grade percentile, where there has been a decrease of students by 14 percentage points. And that speaks very well of our K through 3 schools and the teachers there, and it indicates that they are doing the right thing. And I believe with all my heart that the professional development that we have had through the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute has sparked these change in scores. And we all know that change is often times slow and often times painful, but we see the results.

Looking beyond testing, and more importantly to me, is the success of an individual child. And it is the child who may have otherwise been labeled at an early age to be learning disabled, to be a slow learner or to be dyslexic. And we all know how labels stick. It is the child who was given a fair opportunity to learn at a slower rate without being squashed by the old system before he had a chance to develop. It is the child similar to an Einstein or a Winston Churchill who has a tremendous amount to contribute to society in spite of the stigma of test scores. It is the child who one day will be our next John Grisham, Eudora Welty, because during their early years, they were inspired to put their feelings down on paper. Those successes cannot be measured by test scores, but we will celebrate them just the same.

Over the years, we have found very creative ways to bring the Writing and Thinking Institute into our schools, because we felt that that was a very important vision that we wanted to meet and to realize. So in addition to dollars from Eisenhower, Title I, and class size reduction, we blended with State and local funds and with grant money, such as the Mississippi Power Foundation and BellSouth grants, to help us realize our vision. Last year alone, we

spent $25,000. This year, we are spending $33,000, as we expand our professional development to reach the teachers in fourth and fifth grades. Next year we will include this middle school, sixth through eighth, so the momentum that we have been able to create for writing and thinking independently can be realized here, as well.

PREPARED STATEMENT

If we look at the dollars spent over the past 10 years, I would dare say that it reaches into the hundreds of thousands and worth every penny of it. And who would have ever guessed that one teacher attending one institute would have created so much change in our district. Thank you.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KIM MYRICK STASNY

Ten years ago, I had a teacher who was selected to participate in the summer institute at USM. Neither of us knew very much about the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute but thought it would be a worthwhile experience. This teacher returned for a new school year, invigorated to implement the philosophy she now embraced and in the fall of that same year, was invited to serve on a Portfolio Assessment Task Force sponsored by the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Project. What an honor! And what an impact it has made on our district!

Knowing that many children lose their interest in school by the time they enter third grade and add to the drop out rate by ninth grade, we decided to do something about it during the early years. The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute assisted us in implementing a nongraded assessment system in kindergarten through third grade. By focusing on learning for the sake of learning in a non-competitive environment, all children are given the opportunity to acquire critical skills without losing their enthusiasm for learning.

My feet are grounded in reality. I understand all too clearly how test scores are used, or should I say misused, to measure an individual's worth. Our test scores in grades four through nine have improved dramatically over the past five years. However, the most staggering statistics are seen in the fourth grade lower quartile where there has been a decrease of 14 percentage points. That speaks well of our K–3 schools and indicates they are doing something right. I believe with all my heart that professional development through the Writing/Thinking Institute has sparked the change in scores.

Looking beyond testing and more importantly to me is the success of the individual. It's the child who may have otherwise been labeled at an early age as a slow learner or learning disabled or dyslexic. And we all know, labels stick. It's the child who was given a fair opportunity to learn at a slower rate without being "squashed by the system" before he had a chance to develop. It's the child, similar to an Einstein or Winston Churchill, who has a tremendous amount to contribute to society in spite of the stigma of test scores. It's the child who one day will be our next John Grisham or Eudora Welty because during their early years they were inspired to express themselves on paper. Those successes cannot be measured with test scores. And we will celebrate them just the same.

Over the years, we have found creative ways to bring the Writing/Thinking Institute into our schools. Dollars from Eisenhower, Title I, and Class Size Reduction have been blended with state and local funds to help us realize our vision. Last year, we spent $25K and this year $33K as we expand professional development to reach fourth and fifth grade teachers. Next year we will include the middle school so the momentum that has been created for writing and thinking independently can be nurtured. If we look at the dollars spent over the past ten years, I estimate it would reach into the hundreds of thousands and worth every penny of it. Who would have ever guessed that one teacher attending one summer institute would have created so much change?

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much, Dr. Stasny. Now, Stacey Gorum.

STATEMENT OF STACEY GORUM, TEACHER, NORTH BAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Ms. GORUM. Thank you for having me today. I am honored to be here from the trenches. I truly love my school, and I am proud to be speaking to you today.

"I know I am a good reader, because I read every day at school and at home. When I read Peter and the Wolf to my class, it made me proud."

"Sometimes when I do not know a word, or if I cannot read someone's name, I just say "A" if it starts with an "A" like Allison, and I keep on reading."

"I can read a joke book to calm myself down. When I am finished, I can let my friend read the book if he needs to calm down, too."

"My plan to be an even better reader is to read more books and write some, too."

"These excerpts were taken from a reflection written by a third grade student in my classroom during a demonstration lesson presented by Linda Allsup of the Writing and Thinking Institute. This child has revealed so much to us in this one reflection. He wrote that he has learned a valuable life skill by using a joke book to calm himself down. He described a strategy he uses in reading when he comes to an unknown word, and he States how he plans to continue the learning process. He has also expressed that reading aloud to a group of people can improve his self-esteem. Through this one lesson, a wonderful tool box has been taken from the teacher and turned over to the learner, a tool box that will aid this child through school and afterward into a lifetime of learning. To witness this amazing transformation from passive learner to active learner is why I am what I am, a teacher turned facilitator. I too have been given the power, the power to let go, to let the students become their own navigators in the vast sea of knowledge.

Thanks to our Bay-Waveland School District's continued support in providing quality and professional development, and thanks to the Writing and Thinking Institute's guidance, training and encouragement, I have been given the validation to empower my students. My training with the Writing and Thinking Institute commenced as I attended the South Mississippi Project in the summer of 1997. We worked through the writing process, held response groups for personal to professional writing, demonstrated lessons for each other and published an anthology, thanks to Huntley Biggs. We did research and created lessons that were authentic, reflective and connected writing with every content area. We got a firsthand look at what our students go through as we asked them to be introspective. Through our own reflective writing, we found ways we learn best and wrote about what we learned. The project is comprised of teachers as learners, helping each other to become thinking, reflective helpers.

My multi-age classroom is a learning community. We explore avenues of interest guided by the Mississippi State Board of Education framework, and we examine ourselves in an environment prepared for learning. When people enter our classroom, they often have trouble locating me, the facilitator, because I am among the learners. My assistant and I use every available resource to create an environment where children build knowledge based on life expe-

riences, hands-on project based learning, and other such activities. We use chart paper, large boxes, file folders, refrigerator boxes, computers, math manipulatives, clip boards, reference books from the library and an extensive supply of art materials. When a project is complete, the learner knows that he or she will use a rubric to self evaluate the project, share the project with others and listen to their responses for peer evaluation and publish the piece or project and, finally, write a reflection to connect the enterprise with the world and with learning.

These keys to successful learning are embraced by the Bay-Waveland School District's method of assessment for students K through 3. Through authentic portfolio based assessment, our students see their growth through the year. They determine their own interest, and they write about how it affects their personal lives and their school lives. They understand their successes and base personal learning goals on their learning style, intelligences and interests. This, once again, brings me to the Writing and Thinking Institute.

In 1997, I began my professional development with the Writing and Thinking Institute. All second grade teachers and teachers to our district who were new were undergoing a year long embedded training for portfolio based assessment. Within this training, we defined guidelines, dissected the philosophy, researched the approaches and constructed our own methods of implementing the concept of authentic assessment into our classrooms. We created personal portfolios and underwent the processes we are asking our students to perform, processes like collecting, selecting and reflecting on our lessons, personal writing pieces and professional pieces. This training is irreplaceable.

In the past 3 years, my experiences with the Writing and Thinking Institute have improved my personal writing and my professional writing. The embedded training has included complete staff development for teachers and students K through 3, study group sessions with teachers just from my school and sessions with grade level group district wide. These sessions have made my teacher narratives more detailed and, therefore, more meaningful to parents and educators, my documentation of student observations and accomplishments more complete and, therefore, my teaching more accountable and my knowledge of learning much deeper.

Our school district has come together through these meetings, and we have established standards for our portfolio based assessment. We have edited and completed our student portfolios and profiles until we developed a working vitae that meets our needs as educators that is understandable to parents and help students set goals for future endeavors. We also added progress reports to communicate student growth to parents more often. This year, we have had a parent observation journal to gather anecdotal stories and notes from home. We were guided through these processes by the Writing and Thinking Institute. Our facilitators kept track of our course to help us reach our goal. We will continue to examine our methods of assessment and make necessary changes, trying to provide a picture of the whole child, the social, physical, intelligent, creative and emotional being.

I have continued to grow in my philosophy that when learners understand how and why they are learning, there is no limit to what he or she can accomplish. As I meet the objectives and bench marks set forth by the State of Mississippi, this invaluable training has enabled me to continue to learn and facilitate learning. Thank you for giving me this opportunity today to give testimony.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much, Ms. Gorum, for participating. Our next witness is Sharon McKenna Ladner. Ms. Ladner.

STATEMENT OF SHARON McKENNA LADNER, CURRICULUM INSTRUCTION SPECIALIST, PASCAGOUA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ms. LADNER. Thank you and welcome to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. It is a beautiful day out there today, and I am certainly glad to be here. I bring to this, as a witness, I bring a different perspective, and I think that is probably the extent of today's panel is that everyone has a different perspective. I am a classroom teacher, but I have been fortunate enough to be selected as a lead teacher for Curriculum Instruction in my district. And what that does is it places me alongside teachers in classrooms. In other words, my job is to help implement and see that everything that is going on in our curriculum and through the training that the writing project gives us actually is in place.

Probably my vantage point is the luckiest one here, because I am able to actually see what happens when those teachers begin to implement the strategies and the rich things that they have learned in that type of training session, to be able to get them to go from the training into the classroom and to actually work and have them think and ask questions and then pull back and to write and create again. And they become somewhat like, I like to think of them as doctors, because they are able to better go in and assess their students' needs to be able to prescribe better for what they need and actually go in there and try it out. And after they go in and try it out, they are able to pull back and make additional assessments and be able to plan again for the next day.

Recently, I was in a social studies classroom in Gautier Middle School, and there I watched that happen. A teacher now was freed from the theory books and the practice and isolation into just a plethora of different types of strategies to use. When I walked into his classroom, there he had a group of students doing really rich research in databases, okay, and then another group actively working on a project, while two or three others were working on their writing and so forth. And the teacher was going on and observing and making notes and coming back and saying, okay, what does this mean when this happens. That is where the power is. That is where the writing project really makes its difference, and I am able to go in and see that, and that makes it all the more special.

As a teacher myself, I owe everything that I have done professionally as a teacher to a lot of people in this room. Of course, my mother, who is a teacher herself, is in this room, a lot of writing project sisters and brothers, but my love of the writing project probably came behind a bathroom door in Jackson, Mississippi, when one Sherry Swain cornered me, oh, back in 1993, I guess it was, and said wait a minute. From that point on, I began to see exactly that my philosophies on what learning needed to be came

together in such a beautiful way as I was gifted with the training and portfolios and assessment in teaching those types of professional development, going through the writing project myself. Not too long ago, when I received an award, I sat back and I thought, you know, no person, no teacher develops in isolation. It takes many people to shape a teacher. So I picked up the phone, and I made a very important phone call to Sherry Swain that day, because I wanted to thank her, because the writing project has given me the ability to become so much more than I ever originally thought. And the impact that it makes on the students is just amazing.

This is kind of silly, but just a few weeks ago, we had the Junior Miss Pageant for both Pascagoula and Gautier, and the winner had to speak about, well, actually, all the girls had to speak about their hero, and she selected me. Do you know why, because I was able to give her the freedom of writing and to become a writer and to know herself better and to become a better student. And that is probably the best award that I have ever gotten publicly like that, because it brought the whole thing that I have done to a point to where I could actually see that difference. So, to me, the National Writing Project is the very essence of what teacher education and bringing teacher quality should be. All I can do is hope that I can continue my part with the National Writing Project, with the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute, with the USM Writing Project and the newly formed Live Oak One, so that I can continue to help other teachers as those people helped me.

In closing, I wanted to share with you, we just completed a writing project, a segment of sessions of writing project called the Wonder of Learning in our district. And I could not help when I was creating this to be able to pull a few—what we do is after we go to evaluate a project like this, we want to ask teachers too, we invite them to respond in writing about what they think, about the impact that the training has made in their lives as teachers. We also ask the students. Allow me to read a couple of short ones here. This is from Lisa Myers. She is a sixth grade school teacher at William Palmer Middle School. "I just completed a 7 month ongoing training program delivered by the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute. As a math teacher in the Pascagoula school system, I have acquired writing skills in this workshop that I can take back to the classroom to better stimulate and motivate my students. I can monitor and adjust this newly acquired information to meet each student's needs, integrate via technology training I received and better prepare my students for the future." Ada Carlisle, from Trent Lott Middle School, says "the difference their Wonder of Learning Program has made in the lives of teachers and students is incredible," exclamation point. "But the best part is the reaction of individual students as their eyes are opened in wonder and excitement. Please, please, please keep this funding going." Sissie Tumer, from Gautier Middle School is a sixth grade student. She made a very, very important observation. She says, "if you ask a school dropout why they quit, they would probably say because school is so boring. I hope we can keep doing the reading writing process, because it is different. It is the kind of thing that helps make us smart while it's still being fun." And finally, Maurice

Mendenhall, a sixth grade student from Gautier Middle School, said, "you, the teacher, do not limit me anymore on what I can learn."

My closing statement is a statement that of teacher mentor of mine, Dixie Gaswami, one of my favorite teachers from my Master's Program at Bread Loaf School of English. She whipped by an e-mail the other day, and she grabbed a quote from somewhere, but I thought that this totally embodies the spirit of the National Writing Project teacher consultant, and this is what it says: You must be the change you want to see in the world, you must be the change.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to you today. It has been an honor.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much for your contribution to the hearing. That was a very eloquent statement. Lisa Eveleigh.

STATEMENT OF LISA EVELEIGH, PARENT, NORTH ELEMENTARY, BAY ST. LOUIS, MS

Ms. EVELEIGH. Thank you for having me here. It is an honor to represent the parents in the district. As a parent, I can say that the National Writing Project has had a direct and tremendously beneficial effect on the education of my child, or rather, is having a direct benefit. My daughter Helen, is nearing the end of her second year in a multi-aged first through third grade classroom at North Bay Elementary here in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. And yes, it is a rural school in a State that often scores near the bottom in standardized testing. So why is my daughter having another fabulous year reading and writing well above grade level, enjoying school and proving herself an independent learner, by, for example, her extremely knowledgeable command of the archaic details of Henry the Eighth's many marriages? In part, it is because she is the daughter of a historian and an editor, but in greater part, it is because the teachers she has had at North Bay believe that what a child does with knowledge matters. And I believe that the National Writing Project directly fosters this approach to teaching and learning, and I am grateful for its influence in my daughter's classroom and in the school that she attends.

The teachers who participate in the program, as you know, are from any grade level and discipline. My daughter's teacher, Mary Kay Dean, has been involved with this program since its earliest days, I believe. And as a regular volunteer in her classroom, I see the benefits of that involvement first hand. Ms. Dean's active use of the strategy she has developed through the National Writing Project has helped Helen, at the end of her first grade year, complete a written research project of Beatrix Potter, that perennial favorite children's author. And it is absolutely wonderful to read those Peter Rabbit stories, but to read them and then explore them by writing about them is more than wonderful, it is divine. It is to enter into an act of creation in and of itself. And we want our children to be active learners, to take the knowledge that is handed to them and fashion it into something to make it their own.

I would like to share with you a sample of my daughter's writing that is included in this wonderful anthology of original fiction of poetry by students in her class last year. And every child in the class

contributed to this book. And my point here is not to share with you how talented my kid is, of course, do not all parents believe their children are, my point is actually to share with you a verse from a poem that could be written by any child in first, second or third grade, and, in fact, each child in my daughter's classroom did write one of these poems. And here is one verse, which is one of three:

I am Helen, a sister, a cousin, a babysitter, a daughter, a book lover and a person who enjoys science. I wonder why it never snows in Mississippi. I hear my little sister slam the screen door, she is leaving for the store with my mother. I hear my cat turn on the car motor. I see my cat going to the store wearing lipstick and coming back with 10,000 cans of cat food. I want my sister to stop coming in the room and wrecking it up. I am Helen, a sister, a cousin, a babysitter, a daughter, a book lover and a person who enjoys science.

And the poem evolves in that fashion, repeating that refrain.

The reason that my daughter wrote this poem and many other writings in her classroom is because her teacher's interest in writing. And why is her teacher interested in writing? They are not only interested in writing, but able to develop writing in her students, because through the National Writing Project, she has had the opportunity to transform this interest into a plan for the classroom to engage the writer in her students. I know as a writer and editor, and my husband, a historian, will agree with me, and you might too, that the best way to truly crystallize an idea is to do so in writing, whether we are talking about a menu or grocery list, a family calendar, a letter to the editor of the local Seacoast Echo, a complex computer program designed for use at Stennis Space Center or a dissertation in anthropology. We are all writers in one way or another, and to write is to know.

We have a president now who has made literacy the focus of his educational directives, a president whose wife is a former school librarian. It would be extremely shortsighted of him to cut a quarter century old program with a proven track record that rests at the heart of any literacy initiative, for writing is a complement of reading. Without writing, the real and original thinking that is sparked by literacy simply will not develop.

PREPARED STATEMENT

As a parent of a child who has directly benefitted from the National Writing Project, I thank Senator Cochran for his continued support, and I respectfully respect that Senator Lott continues supporting the program he has endorsed in the past, and I hope that President Bush has the wisdom to recognize that the National Writing Project is making a difference in the lives of our children as it has in Helen and those of her classmates.

[The statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LISA EVELEIGH

As a parent I can say that the National Writing Project has had a direct and tremendously beneficial effect on the education of my child. My daughter, Helen, is nearing the end of her second year in a multi-age first- through third-grade classroom at North Bay Elementary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Yes, we are in a "rural" school in the one state in the union that routinely scores at the bottom in all manner of standardized testing. So why is our daughter having another fabulous year—reading and writing well above grade level, enjoying school, and proving herself an independent learner by, for example, her extremely knowledgeable command

of the arcane details of Henry VIII's many marriages? In part, it's because she is the daughter of a historian and an editor, but in greater part it is because the teachers she has had at North Bay believe that what a child does with knowledge matters. And I believe that the National Writing Project directly fosters this approach to teaching and learning, and I am grateful for its influence in my daughter's classroom.

In Mississippi the National Writing Project fosters the Writing/Thinking Institute, which has a presence on seven of the state's university campuses. Teachers train in teaching reading and writing together through the summer institutes and turn right around and apply what they've learned to their classrooms. The partner in learning for the teacher is the university. The teachers at the institute are other teachers who are experienced in the program. The teachers who participate are from any grade level and discipline. My daughter's teacher, Mary Kay Deen, has been involved with this program since its earliest days, and as a regular volunteer in her classroom, I see the benefits of that involvement firsthand.

Ms. Deen's active use of the strategies she has developed through the National Writing Project is why Helen, at the end of her first grade year, completed a written research project on Beatrix Potter, that perennial favorite children's author. It's absolutely wonderful to read the Peter Rabbit stories. But to read them and then explore them by writing about them is more than wonderful. It is divine; it is to enter into an act of creation in and of itself. We want our children to be active learners, to take the knowledge that is handed to them and fashion it into something, to make it their own.

I would like to share with you a sample of my daughter's writing that is included in this wonderful anthology of original fiction and poetry by students in her class last year. Every child in the class contributed to this book. My point here is not to share with you how talented my kid is. Of course-don't all parents believe their children are? My point is to share with you a verse from a poem that could be written by any child in first, second, or third grade-and, in fact, each child in my daughter's classroom did write one of these poems.

Here's one verse, which is one of three:

I am Helen, a sister, a cousin, a baby sitter, a daughter, a book lover and a person who enjoys science.
I wonder why it never snows in Mississippi. I hear my little sister slam the screen door as she is leaving for the store with my mother.
I hear my cat turn on the car motor.
I see my cat going to the store wearing lipstick and coming back with ten thousand cans of cat food.
I want my sister to stop coming in the room and wrecking it up.
I am Helen, a sister, a cousin, a baby sitter, a daughter, a book lover, and a person who enjoys science.

The reason that my daughter wrote this poem, and many other writings, is because her teacher is interested in writing. And why is her teacher interested in writing, and not only interested in writing, but able to develop writing in her students? Because through the National Writing Project, she has had the opportunity to transform this interest into a plan for the classroom to engage the writer in her students.

I know as a writer and editor, and my husband, a historian, will agree with me (and you might too), that the best way to truly crystallize an idea is to do so in writing-whether we're talking about a menu or grocery list, a family calendar, a letter to the editor of the local Sea Coast Echo, a complex computer program designed for use at Stennis Space Center, or a dissertation in anthropology. We are all writers, in one way or another. And to write is to know.

We now have a president who says he has made literacy the focus of his educational directives, a president whose wife is a former school librarian. It would be extremely short-sighted of him to cut a quarter-century-old program with a proven track record that rests at the heart of any literacy initiative. For writing is the complement of reading, the yin to its yang. Without writing, the real and original thinking that is sparked by literacy simply won't happen. As the parent of a child who has directly benefited from the National Writing Project, I thank Senator Cochran for his continued support. I respectfully request that Senator Lott continue supporting a program he has endorsed in the past. And I hope that President Bush has the wisdom to recognize that the National Writing Project is making a difference in the lives of all our children, as it has in Helen's and those of her classmates.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you very much. That is a very interesting and informative presentation and heartwarming presentation by this panel. And I am deeply grateful for each of you for

taking the time to participate in it and help us understand, from your point of view, the importance of the National Writing Project in our State and locally-based projects that flow from that.

Let me ask a few questions that we had thought about in advance that might help us create a record of information and facts about this program that could be persuasive to others who may read the record, members of the staff of our subcommittee on appropriations and other senators, as well. Dr. Stasny, let me ask you, as a superintendent, what differences do you see in the teachers and students that you can attribute to the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project?

Dr. STASNY. Probably going back to a mission statement that was created 7 or 8 years ago, is to create life-long learners. And when a teacher goes through the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute, it really changes their perspective on what learning is, and they always come back with that love of books, with the love of writing, with the love and desire to learn more. And that is an absolutely perfect model for the children in those classrooms. For the children, I see more excitement in the classroom as they go about actively learning. It is amazing to walk into the classrooms and see them critiquing each other's work and making suggestions on how they could make it better or are suggesting how they could explain a concept better than what they did. And they really truly get into this, even at the kindergarten age when they cannot read, but they can still learn to edit and to critique each other in a very humane and kind way, where there is not any competition or any put-downs, so to speak, with the classes. So I am seeing more energetic and more enthusiastic learners come up. And I am anxious to see by the time they get to ninth grade, what differences are made as the dropout rates begin, because that is where they start leaving our school system and going on their own way without finishing their high school education.

Senator COCHRAN. Does costs deter teacher participation in this or other professional development?

Dr. STASNY. In our particular district, we have provided all of the professional development for the teachers at no cost to them. I think travel is always paid for if they have to go away. For the last few years, we have used the peer coaching model, where the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Institute teachers are here in the district with us, and they are here now finishing up this particular year. So as far as cost to the teachers, no. And we have made it a priority in our district to provide this training, and that is where we put our focus. So we find the funds one way or the other, and it always helps to know that there will be funds continued from the sources that I mentioned earlier.

Senator COCHRAN. Let me ask Ms. Gorum this question: How have you have found the National Writing Project, or in this occasion, the Mississippi Writing and Thinking Project, different from other professional development experiences?

Ms. GORUM. Well, for one thing, it started with an intensive everybody get together for a long period of time and work together and camaraderie, and then it was embedded, and it has been embedded as part of my professional development since 1997, so for 4 years, and we have grown together. We have gone from trying

to implement one idea into turning it into a very large picture, getting in as deep as how learning actually takes place and brain based research, and we have drawn in the arts, and it has grown, it has mushroomed. And our facilitators, the people that work with us all year long, the same people, having the same folks return has really bonded us together, but I think mostly just having that embedded ongoing training has been very different from any other professional development.

Senator COCHRAN. Ms. Ladner, let me ask you how did your classrooms change after you began participating in the Writing Project Professional Development?

Ms. LADNER. If I have to go back and pick one thing, I would think that it would have to be the grass roots, I want to say, movements that I took with my students in my classroom to reevaluate. What happened to me is it actually got me to reevaluate everything I did and go back to what I was really trying to do teaching and goal wise and how I was going to get there and why I chose the things I chose to do and what happened when I chose to do them. And together, it was like the best of teacher research, because, you know, together with the students that I had at that time, I kind of stumbled around a lot and so forth, but there was something in me that it was, I do not know whether it is born in or what, I just knew when good instruction happened. And the particular training that I had with portfolios and then the actual summer institute that I attended helped to shape all of this into sense, it made sense. And ever since then, everything that has come along, every national standard, I am talking about academic and for teachers with the national board, has all played into what already existed with the National Writing Project. It is almost like the National Writing Project is the one that had the first dibby-dubs, if you want to call it, on these standards and the way they are put into the classroom.

So what happened as a teacher in moving this through grass roots in my classroom, as things get piled on me with standards and curriculum and so forth, it is like, oh, that is right, well, that is just more of this, or that is what I already do. And so now what happens to me as a teacher, it is my responsibility to be able to help teachers make some sense out of the standards, because knowing your subject matter is one thing, being able to teach it to students in this manner is quite another. So I think that messiness, that grass roots that helped me change and helped me make sense, and then when standards were brought in, they really made sense. And now it is moving on beyond my classroom into others.

Senator COCHRAN. Ms. Eveleigh, as a parent, have you learned some indicators of good writing instruction?

Ms. EVELEIGH. Yes, I have. I think it is a willingness to move away from the end result and give over to the process, because I have noticed that I really like the fact that students at Helen's school keep a portfolio, and they select it themselves. And I have seen my daughter go through four drafts of a story on the computer to get it exactly where she wants it to be. And if we had just started with a first draft, she never would have been there. That would have been evaluated, it would have been over with, but she has been able to go back to it over a period of time, go through the

whole process, and then she is satisfied with it, and so are the rest of us.

Senator COCHRAN. How has your daughter's experience changed the way you look at her writing?

Ms. EVELEIGH. Well, she is so young, and she is my oldest child, so I really did not go into it with a distinct way of looking at the writing, but I feel really encouraged. I know that the first thing she brings home is not exactly a reflection on all that she can do.

Senator COCHRAN. Well, it is an interesting experience for me to hear the perspectives that each of you have brought to this hearing and the experiences that you have had and the understanding that you have of the program and how it works and how it has succeeded in changing lives, not only yours, but others in the process, and emphasizes the value that it represents in our educational institutions.

We have available to us a number of documents that I am putting in the record of the hearing and including in our records, so that we will have a full body of information, for example, a copy of the Academy of Educational Development study, which I quoted from earlier. I am talking about the National Writing Project Evaluation Student Writing Achievement, Year One. There are a number of written testimonies, which we will also include in the hearing record. Also, the record, for the information of all of you who are attending the hearing, the record will remain open for a period of 2 weeks, and we will be glad to receive any comments, letters, statements that anyone wishes to submit to the committee for inclusion in the hearing record that may be pertinent to this subject.

[The information follows:]

NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT EVALUATION, STUDENT WRITING ACHIEVEMENT, YEAR ONE RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Writing Project (NWP) is a nationwide professional development network of teachers that works to improve the teaching of writing across the curriculum. Currently serving 168 local sites across the country, NWP is a "teachers-teaching-teachers" model of professional development. In 1999, NWP commissioned the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to conduct a national evaluation of the project. This report presents the findings from 583 third- and fourth-grade students who responded to timed writing assignments, or "prompts." Other data collected for this evaluation, including data on NWP teachers' classroom practices, teacher assignments and the accompanying student work will provide an understanding of the context for writing in NWP classrooms and will be discussed in subsequent reports.

The writing prompts were administered in 24 classrooms in four states. All participating teachers attended a writing project summer institute and had experience with NWP that varied from a few years to more than eight years. The sites and classrooms selected represent a diverse sample of NWP classrooms in terms of location, setting, size of district and school, racial/ethnic makeup, and number of ELL students. The majority of the students were in low socioeconomic status (SES) schools with at least half of their students eligible for free/reduced-price lunch.

A baseline and follow-up prompt were administered to measure students' writing progress over the year. The baseline measure was administered during fall 1999, and the follow-up measure was administered in spring 2000. Each of the two prompts used in this study asked students to write a persuasive letter to someone they knew. Their writing was scored by teachers trained in applying scoring guides, or "rubrics," based on two separate aspects of writing: rhetorical effectiveness and writing conventions. The rhetorical effectiveness score addresses content, organization and style of a piece of writing. The conventions score addresses student mastery of the conventions of written English—of usage, mechanics and spelling. The scoring

rubrics are included in the appendix. Before the papers were scored, all identifying information was removed. Readers were not told which paper was from the baseline and which was from the follow-up administration.

The three major findings from an analysis of the student writing are:

(1) Almost all fourth graders (96 percent) and most third graders (85 percent) reached adequate or strong achievement for rhetorical effectiveness on their writing prompt by follow-up. Most fourth graders (82 percent) and two-thirds of third graders (66 percent) demonstrated general or strong control of the writing conventions of usage, mechanics and spelling.

(2) Third- and fourth-grade scores showed statistically significant increases from baseline to follow-up for both rhetorical effectiveness and writing conventions.[1]

(3) Although there were some differences in achievement between sub-groups, these findings hold true for students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, English language learners, students from schools with high percentages of free-lunch eligible students, and males and females.

Overall, these findings show that students in classrooms taught by NWP teachers made significant progress over the course of the school year in rhetorical effectiveness and applying writing conventions in persuasive writing. By the end of the school year, a majority of students in the study reached adequate or strong achievement in rhetorical effectiveness and demonstrated general or clear control over the conventions of usage, mechanics and spelling.

INTRODUCTION

The National Writing Project (NWP) is a nationwide professional development network that began in 1974. The mission of the project is to improve the teaching of writing across the curriculum in the nation's schools. Currently serving 168 local sites across the country, NWP is a "teachers-teaching-teachers" model of professional development. This model of professional development acknowledges the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise and leadership. Through NWP, experienced teachers attend invitational summer institutes at their local writing project sites to examine the theory and practice of the teaching of writing, learn in a community of K-university teachers, conduct research, and develop their own writing. During the school year, these teachers provide professional development workshops for other teachers in their schools and communities. In addition, writing project sites provide a range of other supports for teachers and schools, including inservice workshops, teacher research groups, new teacher support, writing and reading conferences, and parent workshops.[2]

In 1999, NWP commissioned the Academy for Educational Development (AED) to conduct a three-year national evaluation of the project. The goal of the evaluation is to collect data on how student writing is developed in classrooms, the conditions that support student achievement in writing, and the outcomes for students in NWP classrooms. To address these, AED collected several pieces of data from 24 different third-and-fourth grade writing project classrooms located around the country in 1999 and 2000. The data collected included (1) student responses to timed writing prompts administered in the fall and spring; (2) two teacher assignments from each classroom; (3) student work corresponding to each of the teacher assignments; (4) written surveys and telephone interviews with every participating teacher; and (5) extant data on the schools, districts, and communities within which schools were located. The first year of the evaluation was considered a pilot year to test the feasibility of the evaluation design and the validity and reliability of the writing prompts and scoring rubrics adapted and created for this study.

This report presents findings from the student responses to timed writing prompts administered during the first year of the evaluation in the fall (baseline) and spring (follow-up) of the 1999–2000 school year. Findings from other data collected for this study will be presented in subsequent reports. The report is organized in three sections: study participants, methodology and results.

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[1] ($p<.001$).

[2] For additional information on NWP, see the following sources: National Writing Project (2000). National Writing Project 1999 Annual Report, Berkeley, CA: Author; Smith, Mary Ann (2000). A Marriage That Worked: The Department of Defense Dependents Schools and the National Writing Project. Phi Delta Kappan, V81, N8, pp 622–26; National Writing Project (undated). Essentials of the NWP Model, internal document, Berkeley, CA:Author; and St. John, Mark (1999). The National Writing Project Model: A five-year retrospective on findings from the Annual Site Survey. Berkeley, CA: Inverness Research Associates.

[CLERK'S NOTE.—The full text of the report: "National Writing Project Evaluation, Student Writing Achievement, Year One Results" will be retained in the Subcommittee files.]

[CLERK'S NOTE.—The report: "National Writing Project Annual Report 2000" can be found on Web: http://www.writingproject.org]

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI,
Jackson, MI, April 9, 2001.

Senator THAD COCHRAN,
Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC.

DEAR SENATOR COCHRAN: Mississippi's National Writing Project is an important program that is a fine example of the effective blending of federal and state funds. I am writing to give my support for its continued operation through the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute at Mississippi State University.

Through the Institute, teachers learn how to become better teachers and students learn to be better writers. Each summer, some of our master teachers get the opportunity to hone their own writing skills and publish their work for national audiences. Quality student writing is also a primary focus. Teachers conduct research and study ways to help our students become more effective writers.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi is a premiere provider of high quality professional development. Each year 4–5,000 of our teachers take part in workshops that last throughout the school year. One of our participating teachers wrote, "The NAT has made a difference in the way I teach, and the way I teach has made a difference in the way my students write and learn." Frankly, that speaks volumes.

I am convinced that Mississippi and America are getting their money's worth from NWP. Clearly, our state is renowned for her writers. The NWP is playing a key role in helping develop our next generation. I hope you will continue to provide your substantial influence in Washington so that we will continue to benefit from this program. I appreciate all you do for our state.

Sincerely yours,

AMY TUCK,
Lieutenant Governor.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STATE SENATOR ALICE V. HARDEN

As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, former teacher and advocate for teachers, I have made it a point to experience first-hand the programs of organizations that claim to support teachers in Mississippi. One such organization is the National Writing Project, represented in our state by the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute. In January 2000, I accepted an invitation to join more than 60 teachers of the Institute for a three-day strategic planning retreat. There I learned that the National Writing Project focuses on improving student writing and on high quality professional development for teachers. I learned that the National Writing Project was the first educational organization to profess that the "best teacher of teachers is another teacher," that "teachers of writing must write," and that "universities and public schools must collaborate to bring the best practice and research to classroom teachers across the nation." I worked alongside teachers who were planning a year-long professional development program that would ultimately improve student writing and the teaching of writing across our state. I embraced the efforts and expertise of these master teachers who carried the banner of the National Writing Project for Mississippi. Later I was able to enact legislation to see that state funds for this valuable program were made available.

I have not been disappointed. The National Writing Project—or the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute—continues to achieve an aggressive agenda for teachers in our state. Teachers associated with the NWP in Mississippi write and publish. They conduct an amazing amount of professional development—over 100,000 contact hours last year. They conduct research on student writing, parent involvement, and staff development. They pass the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards at an impressive rate—77 percent for National Writing Project teachers as opposed to 47 percent for teachers not involved with the NWP.

The National Writing Project is vital to the continued success of Mississippi teachers. Our state depends on the NWP sites in Mississippi for the most current re-

search-base on the teaching of writing. Our state depends on the NWP sites in Mississippi for the most intensive and effective professional development for our teachers.

Research conducted in Mississippi schools suggests that NWP programs focusing on writing to learn reading and math skills are also effective. Studies conducted in West Point and in Kemper County show that student achievement and district accreditation rose after intensive work with the Mississippi network of NWP sites.

Our state depends on the NWP sites in Mississippi for ongoing collaboration in the long saga toward competence in teaching and learning.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KIM PATTERSON, CO-DIRECTOR, MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY WRITING/THINKING PROJECT

I am Kim Patterson, a middle school teacher, currently serving as Co-Director of the Mississippi State University Writing/Thinking Project. It gives me great pleasure to share with you the impact and influence of the National Writing Project and its Mississippi affiliate, the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute, on the teachers of the great state of Mississippi and our nation. In this testimony I will share what Institute professional development looks like at Second Street Elementary School in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi and share the significance of a national research study involving Mississippi teachers.

Professional development designed and delivered by the teacher consultants of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute is about building local expertise and honoring teachers' knowledge. Teacher consultants of the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute never propose to "fix" teachers or problems inherent in teaching. Rather, when working with teachers in schools, teacher consultants draw from and build upon the expertise of the teachers in the group. For example, I have had the pleasure of working with a group of 4th and 5th grade teachers at Second Street Elementary School in Bay St. Louis, MS. Through the school's leadership team, teachers in this school voiced a desire to integrate writing into all parts of the curriculum. The starting place for our work then was to identify those best practices related to writing-to-learn that were already in place in the classrooms. Throughout this school year, our work together has been to build upon those best practices already in place to deepen and strengthen the instructional practices of the teachers.

The first part of each monthly workshop session is spent hearing teachers tell how they've implemented strategies shared in a previous session. Each time the teachers have expanded and adapted the strategies to make them their own and make them work for their students in their individual classrooms. Teachers at Second Street Elementary have also been involved in classroom demonstrations of effective practice. During these classroom demonstrations, a small group of teachers observe and participate in the lesson. After the demonstration, we meet as a small group to debrief the lesson and reflect on its significance. Teachers also make plans during this debriefing session for adapting the lesson to their own classrooms. Another component of the professional development at Second Street Elementary is study group meetings. During these small group sessions, teachers read research related to teaching writing and plan lessons for their classrooms based on the research. They also study student samples to diagnose and prescribe instruction based on the strengths and needs of individual students. During these study groups, teachers also examine rubrics, score student papers, and develop rubrics for their own classroom use. They also design instructional strategies for helping students use rubrics and checklists to improve their work.

It is this building of expertise, I think, that distinguishes Writing/Thinking Institute from many canned programs designed to "fix" what is wrong with teachers. These teachers at Second St. Elementary have spent considerable time examining their own practice, thinking about what works and why, and designing instruction themselves to "fix" the gaps they recognize in their own teaching. My prediction is that these teachers will engage in these sorts of analyses and reflections long after some other "programs" or mandates have run their course.

The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute, through its affiliation with the National Writing Project, showcases effective teachers and teaching from Mississippi classrooms. Currently, six 3rd and 4th grade classroom teachers from Mississippi are involved in a national research project sponsored by the National Writing Project and conducted by the Academy for Educational Development (AED). This study involving the Mississippi State University Writing/Thinking Project, along with three other National Writing Project sites from UCLA, Philadelphia, Oklahoma and Kentucky, was designed to evaluate the quality of writing assignments given by Writing Project teachers and student outcomes in writing.

During each year of this three-year project, teachers administer a persuasive writing prompt in the fall and a similar persuasive prompt in the spring. Data from year one of the study shows that 57 percent of the students in Mississippi increased their rhetorical effectiveness scores from the baseline prompt to the follow-up prompt. Fifty-one percent of the students increased their score for writing conventions from the baseline to the follow-up prompt.

An additional component of this study is the scoring of teachers' assignments and the corresponding student work related to those assignments. Each year of the study, the teachers submit two writing assignments given to their students and the corresponding student work from those assignments. Along with the assignment, teachers submit an in-depth description of how the writing assignment fits into the larger context of their classroom or unit of study. The teachers' assignments are scored using three criteria—construction of knowledge, learning concepts in the content areas, and connection to students' lives. The corresponding student work is scored using the same three criteria with an additional criteria related to using conventions of language. Even though the study is not designed for comparison among sites involved in the study, preliminary data shows that Mississippi teachers scored highest on the Construction of Knowledge criteria when compared with the other three sites involved in year one of the study.

At the beginning of the study, the teachers attended an orientation meeting in Berkeley, California, to help design the writing prompts issued to students in the fall and spring. Teachers also reviewed and discussed the rubrics that would be used to score the students' responses to the writing prompt. Before this weekend session was over the teachers from Mississippi were already talking about how they could use the materials and experiences from the meeting to enhance their own teaching. They were discussing ways to help their students improve persuasive writing, a genre tested in Mississippi at grades four and seven. They were also discussing their own teaching and how their assignments and units might compare to the criteria used to score their teaching assignments. The richness of these professional discussions continued throughout the school year as the teachers met regularly to study the guidelines and rubrics for scoring the teacher assignments and student work. Near the end of the school year one teacher said, "This is one of the best things I've ever done in my classroom. This has been such a growth experience for me and my students. I know I'll be a better teacher because of this."

Preliminary results from year one, gathered from a discussion with Kari Nelsestuen from AED, indicate that teachers involved with the National Writing Project use writing in a variety of ways in their classrooms. One teacher reported, "We try to include writing in everything that we do. We do research when we're in science and social studies (we don't just read and answer questions). I try to tie things together as much as possible so subjects link together." The results also show that teachers credit the Writing Project for changing their teaching practice in a positive way. One teacher said, "I don't teach the same way I used to. It [Writing Project] has changed my whole style. I used to know things weren't right, but I didn't know why or what to change. I was so sold on things at the Summer Institute, it changed everything."

In June 2000, a second team of Mississippi teachers joined teachers from Oklahoma, California and Philadelphia to score the student writing prompts from the fall and spring as well as the teachers' assignments and student work submitted from each teacher involved in the study. This week-long conference included a study of the rubrics that were used, scoring and discussion of anchor papers, and the actual scoring of the work included in the study. The value of the scoring conference could be summed up with these words from one of the teachers involved, "We need to get all teachers looking at student work and using these findings to make decisions about their next steps. How can we make it part of the school culture?"

The value to Mississippi teachers because of our involvement in this study is far-reaching. A number of teacher consultants regularly use the criteria for scoring teachers' assignments with groups of teachers in staff development. During these sessions, teachers are given an opportunity to examine their own teaching and see how it compares to these criteria. This examination and comparison stimulates discussion related to how we encourage students to engage in authentic intellectual work in our classrooms. Teachers who attended the scoring conference have brought back ideas and materials that they have shared in staff development with other teachers, at their own schools with colleagues, and at state conferences and meetings.

The National Writing Project in Mississippi positively impacts teachers both locally and nationally. At Second Street Elementary School in Bay St. Louis teachers are already planning for next year's professional development workshops. Recently, one teacher said, "I hope we continue these workshops next year. I leave each ses-

sion with ideas I can really use in my classroom. I feel more prepared to help my students be better writers because of these workshops." Teachers involved in the NWP/AED study, those submitting teacher assignments and student work and those participating as scorers, continue to share their excitement at the possibilities this study holds for them and their students. The National Writing Project is vital for both teachers and students in Mississippi and across the nation. I urge the Senate to support the reauthorization of the National Writing Project in the current ESEA bill.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF LINDA BUCHANAN

My experience with the Writing Project has influenced my teaching career in many areas. I shall speak of Writing Project work in relation to receiving National Board Certification, because that is a nationally accepted benchmark that educators around the nation identify with. Since my scores ranged between 3 and 4 in all areas, I feel I can speak to the relevance of Writing Project participation in developing quality teaching professionals.

Looking over the requirements for the National Board entries, I quickly realized that my work with the Writing Project had prepared me well. There were many things I could write about as a part of my Professional entry because of my association with the Writing Project. I have completed action research projects in my media center in collaboration with another teacher, and then presented the findings at state and national meetings. One project focused on the improvement of reading strategies using books of choice from the library and the other on children's research and synthesizing of information. A peer and I led a group of teachers in the development of performance assessment/instruction materials used throughout our state to improve instructional strategies, student engagement with tasks, teachers' ability to analyze student work to plan further instruction, and test scores. Reading extensively and leading other teachers to professional reading through reading workshops has given me numerous and varied strategies that improved learning for children. Numerous projects have led me to investigate national standards in language arts, math, science and social studies. The Writing Project facilitated all of these.

When I studied the National Board entry that focused on creating a Community of Learners in the Classroom, I knew that I had learned appropriate strategies in Writing Project sessions. In fact, I had implemented them and had been teaching other teachers to do this for quite some time. National Boards requirements caused me to adjust and add to my methods, but I had the basic philosophy: the need for community building, developing student responsibility, inclusion of all group members in the task, and respect/appreciation for the talents and diversity of all. My entry focused on writing response groups and how children help one another to improve their writing. Children did improve their writing, but the main growth area was in their ability to accept suggestions from group members, as well as to appreciate, work with, and help others.

I looked forward to the Writing/Social Studies entry because I knew the Writing Project had prepared me well to teach and assess process writing as well as writing to learn. This entry was an absolute delight to prepare because it encompassed so many of the skills and strategies I had implemented through contact with Writing Project teachers. My children wrote to learn in Social Studies and also wrote a fictional narrative. They loved putting their thoughts on paper and improving their work for publication. They loved putting their cooperative group skills to work as they responded to the writing of others. I loved working with children eager to learn new strategies for improving the way they put their own thoughts on paper. The children learned new skills quickly and easily, as they needed them for their writing. For example, I taught one child how to use paragraphing to show when the speaker changed in dialogue. She became the expert and taught all the others this new skill.

Math was also an easy entry for me because it was based on NCTM standards. I had become thoroughly familiar with these standards as I wrote the performance assessment materials mentioned earlier. As with all writing project strategies, the children were engaged, and the learning was hands on and joyful. That is one of the greatest lessons I have gained from association with the Writing Project: engaged students learn more and discipline problems are minimized, meaningful tasks facilitate learning, and learning time is should be joyful for students and teacher. The lesson I chose involved measurement, but, true to Writing Project philosophy, we learned it in a real world context. The children needed measuring skills in order to measure paper, ribbon, etc. to cover and decorate a box to hold their Valentine's cards.

My Science entry was made easy because of my association with a Writing Project teacher who had trained at the Lawrence Hall of Science in Berkley. I had learned many of the strategies employed in the National Science Standards and used them for quite some time. Once you see these strategies and see how wonderfully the children respond and learn from them, you want to use them over and over and then learn new ones. I began with the strategies I had learned from my Writing Project friend for my National Board entry, but quickly ordered other units from the Lawrence Hall of Science. Now my entire school has adopted several units to teach at each grade level. That is the true beauty of the Writing Project-good ideas and strategies are shared with peers.

My favorite part of National Boards was the timed computer test we took the following summer. When I looked at the Reading question, it was like coming home. I had to analyze the strengths and weakness of one child and develop a program of remediation using teaching strategies based on the child's strengths to improve weak areas. I was able to choose from all the strategies I had learned or helped to develop through my writing project activities. I received a score of 4. I think that says a lot for the work that the Writing Project has done.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JEANNE R. EZELL

Because I was a participant in the South Mississippi Writing Project's 1987 Summer Institute, I know firsthand the power of a Summer Institute. As director of this National Writing Project site since 1988, I have also observed about two hundred other teachers experience that power. But trying to explain the transformation Writing Project brings to some teachers' lives is like trying to explain a religious conversion or childbirth to someone who has not had the experience. Teachers' stories seem the best way to try to capture the unique quality of a Writing Project, so I want to share the words of several South Mississippi Writing Project teachers with you.

"I have learned something wonderful about myself: I CAN WRITE!!! I have become a better writer in this Project, and in turn I feel I will be a better classroom teacher. I have learned how to word process on a computer and have been exposed to a whole new approach to the teaching of writing. I was never an A student in my college English courses because I am a poor speller, but I have found this wonderful device called a Spell Checker, and now I can examine my content."

Dottie Glanders' discoveries were made during the South Mississippi Writing Project's 1987 Summer Institute, where she had arrived the first day clutching a dictionary and a handbook. I am amazed at her courage in leaving her two young children at home and driving sixty miles each morning and afternoon just to face the thing she feared most: writing. Somehow, her desire to help her fourth-grade students become writers had outweighed her own insecurity as a writer. Before her husband's transfer took her to California, Dottie continued to write and to present at staff development workshops the demonstration lesson she developed during the Summer Institute.

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"I had not wanted to give up my summer of fun in the sun . . . playing, visiting, and resting . . . getting ready for another year of school. I didn't know that the rejuvenation would come from a renewed spirit and energy with a determination to try the methods I had witnessed in the Writing Project. I didn't know how creative and open the other participants would be or how inspired the five weeks would leave me feeling. I didn't know I'd be ready to begin teaching children before we had even finished our ten weeks of summer vacation."

Jean Sauls, a veteran fourth-grade teacher and the author of two books of poetry, came to the South Mississippi Writing Project's 1989 Summer Institute because a friend wouldn't let her say no. I am amazed that she made what she saw as a sacrifice, giving up her summer of rest, to attend an intensive five-week workshop.

Jean has led a number of staff development workshops and rarely misses a meeting or writing retreat. She continues to think about her teaching and is now working on classroom research projects to better understand what works in her classroom and to share her findings with other teachers. She also sings the Writing Project's praises to her fellow teachers and to her school district administrators, as well as to undergraduate elementary education majors in the methods classes she visits most semesters.

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"This is revival time, and I feel as though I'm rededicating my life (or my life's calling at least). The enthusiasm of this community of growth is contagious. As we read and discuss and write and respond, we are living models of what we want our students to do and be. We have gained empathy for their struggles and insight into their thinking."

Lesa Gibson, who attended a Summer Institute in 1988 and again in 1992, echoes the born-again vocabulary often heard from Writing Project teachers. A high-school English teacher, after her first summer institute, she had written her "confessions of a former worksheet queen":

"For seven years now I have battled the 'Teach 'em grammar' concept in my mind, never really being able to justify its usefulness, its value, or its positive effect on writing skills . . . Maybe that idea works in basketball, but not in grammar. Persistent drill of isolated grammar skills has accomplished nothing in my classroom—except maybe a migraine headache and endless frustration for me and constant complaints and intense boredom for my students. And then I attended the South Mississippi Writing Project. I now recognize that teaching writing in my classroom is not even an option—it is an obligation."

With three young sons now, Lesa has left full-time high school teaching for the time being, but she continues to be active professionally through part-time teaching at a local college, through state conference presentations, and through being a popular staff development presenter and coordinator for the South Mississippi Writing Project. I marvel at the time a busy young mother is willing to give to her profession.

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"I do know that children need and want to write and that they become better writers by writing. They also deserve a teacher who can share the process of writing with them. I want to participate in the Writing Project to improve my writing skills and to become confident enough to provide my students the encouragement and support they need to enjoy writing."

With twenty-six years of elementary school teaching experience, Mary Kay Deen had much to offer the Writing Project when she attended the 1991 Summer Institute. By the end of the Summer Institute, Mary Kay also felt she had gained much. In a chapter she contributed to a National Writing Project publication, Teachers' Voices: Portfolios in the Classroom, Mary Kay wrote about those gains:

"I graduated from college, taught school, and even entered a graduate program, conditionally, of course, due to my low test scores. Rather than advance through the maze of academia, I have involved myself in independent study, conference participation, and classroom research as vehicles for professional growth. For me school was no safe harbor until the summer of 1991, when I met some teachers in the South Mississippi Writing Project who discovered under those layers of test 'cannots' my fern fronds, teacakes birds, and stories."

Mary Kay has been active as a presenter and coordinator of staff development workshops for the South Mississippi Writing Project, as well as a leader of portfolio workshops and Mississippi Assessment Training workshops for the statewide network of Writing Projects. She has often presented at state and regional workshops and in 1994 presented at an international conference in Great Britain. Also in 1994, Mary Kay was inducted into the Mississippi Hall of Master Teachers. I respect Mary Kay's energy and intellectual vigor in continuing to learn and contribute to her profession.

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"What I will do differently, as a result of the knowledge I've gained from articles, discussions, and sharing our stories during the Summer Institute, is push my children to accept more responsibility for their learning through peer conferencing, peer editing, and other strategies. This year, I won't throw up my hands and yell, 'That's all right! I'll edit it!' I will force myself to be the 'facilitator' that I know I should and can be. And now, at the close of this inspiring journey, what have I finally confirmed? I have confirmed that others feel as I do, that in my concerns I am not alone. No, I am indeed not alone."

Nadene Dunlap-Arrington returned to her native Mississippi after working as an editor for a university press and a publisher. She received alternate-route certification and works with at-risk children. I am awed by the enormity of her job and

the thoughtfulness with which she goes about it. Young teachers like her hold the future for all Mississippians.

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"My classroom was never to be the same after the South Mississippi Writing Project. I now truly understood—through my own intimate experiences—and encouraged the process: the time, the support, the community, the safe environment, and the reflection whereby every student and their teacher could engage in the adventure of using the written word. I also discovered a network of Writing Project fellows who share philosophy and possibilities for our educational system. Because of the encouragement of Bette Ford, Co-Director of the South Mississippi Writing Project, I attended the Bread Loaf School of English, so much like the Writing Project. Then, again through the Writing Project, I became involved in providing workshops for teachers throughout the state on the Mississippi Assessment System. When I undertook the challenge of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standard's first area for certification in the fall of 1993, I realized how prepared I was to fulfill the stringent expectations: a process of portfolio, hours of writing, interdisciplinary analysis and reflection, visual artifacts with written and spoken documentation, and collaboration. I thank the South Mississippi Writing Project for grounding me and giving me wings. The ripple effect continues . . ."

Penny Wallin's comments during a 1994 State Board of Education meeting during which she and another teacher were honored as the first two Mississippi teachers to receive certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards are a powerful testimony to the far-reaching effects of a Writing Project summer. Since 1994 a total of fifteen South Mississippi Writing Project teachers have received National Board certification. In Mississippi, where about 40 percent of teachers who attempt this process complete it successfully, over 75 percent of teachers affiliated with one of the state's eight NWP sites receive National Board certification when they attempt it. These board-certified teachers speak of the role the writing and reflection they did during Writing Project summer institutes played in preparing them for the rigorous application process, not only directly through professional reading and writing but also indirectly though offering further opportunities for professional involvement.

In addition to achieving National Board certification, many South Mississippi Writing Project teachers have received national recognition. Two teachers, Jacqueline Rogers and Lois Rodgers received Christa McAuliffe grants during the brief lifetime of that program; Jacqueline Rogers was also chosen as a Disney teacher. Both Senita Walker and Sharon Ladner received Milken Awards. Numerous other teachers have been recognized as school or district teachers of the year. Many South Mississippi Writing Project teachers have served on state and regional committees, as officers of state and national organizations. It is no coincidence that many Writing Project teachers receive awards and recognition. Outstanding teachers apply and are chosen to participate in summer institutes. In fact, they create the Writing Project. That is the magic of the National Writing Project: It empowers teachers to recognize that they are authorities in their own classrooms and within their profession. Those teachers, in turn, empower their students and, in doing so, become and help develop lifelong learners.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOHN W. DORROH

I began my teaching career in January, 1976, as a replacement for a teacher who moved mid-year, leaving half of her biology students with failing grades. At that time, it became my job to try to help those students pull up their grades and to decide, ultimately, who should pass and who should fail. It was quite a challenge with many obstacles. That first year became a metaphor for life: obstacles/opportunities, search for solutions, applications/testing hypotheses, reflection/recovery, repeat the cycle.

I was beginning to suffer from "burn-out" when I became involved with the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute in July, 1988. I was invited to attend a five-day workshop, featuring a retired science teacher, Bob Tierney, who had begun using writing in his science classes in his Bay area school in Fremont , California in the early 80's. The methodology that I began to absorb in those five days literally transformed my classroom and how I viewed the entire profession. Without my involvement with the Writing Project, I most assuredly would have left the profession, or turned into a "truly rotten teacher," ineffective and not fit to be in a science classroom.

I cannot begin to tell you all of the details of how my life and classroom changed in this short testimony but I can certainly give you some highlights. Remember, I attribute all of these changes to the Mississippi Writing/Thinking Project, my local site for the National Writing Project. These highlights include (1) changing from a teacher-dominated classroom to a student-centered one; (2) moving away from "kill-and-drill" worksheets to activities and projects that helped my students learn how to process information and ultimately how to think; (3) incorporating more writing, both informal and formal; (4) incorporating more reading; (5) developing and incorporating student portfolios which helped my students to re-shape their stereotyped negative images of scientists as "nerds"; (6) students and myself becoming more reflective, asking why and how we had learned a particular lesson and asking how we could improve subsequent lessons; (7) including more original open-ended labs rather than "canned" recipe-type labs from a workbook; (8) and learning more about accountability and responsibility. I'm almost sure that I have left out a couple.

After looking at that list, I am wondering WHY these hearings are going on. The National Writing Project and its Teacher/Consultants have proven over and over, year after year, what their work means to the children and teachers of this country. WHY is there even a second thought about cutting the budget for an umbrella of services that does so much good in our country of "sick and ailing" schools? I don't understand it, I honestly don't. This is another obstacle/opportunity for the TC's to amplify our message.

The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute helped my own school district, the West Point Schools, raise its performance rating in one year from a sub-standard 2 to a 3. The Mississippi Writing/Thinking Institute and the staff at Berkeley, California, at National Writing Project headquarters, helped me to gain enough confidence in my own writing to have had at least 15 articles and chapters published in books! In short, the Writing Project SAVED MY PROFESSIONAL LIFE! (Plus, I achieved National Board Certification, using the methodology I learned since 1988.)

For the last 12 years I have grown professionally and see no end to that growth. I can say the same for other T/C's, such as Bob Tierney, who reminds me several times a year that without his involvement with the NWP, he, too, would have burned out and probably left the profession. Why try to cut the budget of such an effective organization? Why not cut some organization which offers no proof of effectiveness?

I beg of you, I plead . . . PLEASE SUPPORT THE NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT and its sites across the country by not cutting the budget. Support us in any other ways that you can. Final comment: Think of your own children or grandchildren for a moment. What kind of classroom do you want them in—a drab, work-sheet filled room with an ineffective teacher who does most of the thinking for the students, one where there is little writing and where the students appear lifeless, bored, and totally uninterested . . . or one where the teacher facilitates the learning, helps the students to use their brain and to develop their natural talents, where the students seem alive, motivated and interested in their learning? It's your choice.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KATHERINE DALE POHL, PARENT

As a parent of a Mississippi public school student, I am writing to voice my support for the National Writing Project. The funding and continuation of this project in Mississippi directly affects whether my family will stay in this state or go back to Huntsville, Alabama. My husband and I moved to the Gulf Coast a year ago on a temporary basis with our two children, a toddler and a kindergartner. We sought the beach, the culture, and the adventure. We left behind friends, family, and priority status in an incredible magnet school for the arts in a city we loved.

We took residence in Bay St. Louis entirely because of the incredible reputation that elementary school has as a whole arts school that is based on National Writing Project philosophies. After one year, we have decided to stay indefinitely because we are so in love with what is going on at North Bay Elementary, and the National Writing Project (as well as incredible and progressive teachers) is responsible for it. We want our son in that school (and school system) for first and second grade as well. We have actually delayed our plans for moving back to Alabama to be sure that our son's crucial formative years will be spent in the right environment for learning and growth. Test scores matter very little to me. What I as a parent am concerned with is what my son can DO with what he is taught. Currently, he is reading, writing, and revising his own writing (along with the rest of his class of five-year olds). The process used by his teachers, and its evolution from the NWP

has given him the confidence to write short stories, poems, songs and journal entries. It shows up in his work in math, science, social skills, art, and all areas of academia and life in the way he thinks, solves problems, revises, and challenges himself.

When my son writes, he spells words just as they sound. He does not slow down to correct himself or his spelling while his ideas are flowing. That will come later, when the flow begins to dwindle and he reads over it, realizing he can make it sound better or print it more neatly. As a result, his writing is more honest and less contrived, including dialogue, questions for the reader to ponder, and subject matter. He is able to write for himself because it pleases him to do so and he has a worthwhile reason to write. Because his classroom environment has embraced reading, writing, and sharing each others' work, his spelling and grammar have naturally begun to fall into place. This process has been natural for him, and joyful for us as parents. It is a process that has been put into place with NWP teachings. It has also made me realize how very unnatural it is to make students hammer out the proper spelling and sentence structure from the beginning, denying them the chance to make decisions, even mistakes. Teachers need support from the education community, including legislators, in order to have parents' support in implementing these proven methods.

My memories of public school include a litany of acronyms for programs which came complete with workbooks, angry, frustrated teachers, and confused, nervous students. We spent a disproportionate amount of time learning procedures for what the state board of education expected of us as opposed to actually learning. The trickle-down effect of the NWP, on the other hand, is pure knowledge, giving children the tools, which will never become obsolete, to organize thoughts and questions. It is an investment in the actual thinking process of students. For example, we have tried several times to teach our phone number to our kindergartner. He is perfectly capable of memorizing it, but simply had no interest. It was just numbers to him and he felt that in an emergency, adult help would be available. It simply did not apply to him. Yesterday, he began listing (part of the writing process used by NWP). Together, we listed dozens of situations in which he might need to know his phone number, responding each time with the phone number. "If a skunk walks up and wants to ask about the snail I found, I tell him he smells and just call me from far away. When he says 'What's your number?' I say 467–6908!" We continued, revising along the way, until we had a rhythmic formula going. We ended up with a logical way to learn and a veritable children's book. Later that night, he repeated the process with his father, this time elaborating and adding details, such as how he found the snail and how the skunk knew about it. Because he is urged to be descriptive in class, he has become more observant about what he sees, reads, and writes, noticing rhymes, patterns, and details. I was thrilled that he was writing off the top of his head, and as a bonus, a string of numbers (math) has meaning for him now. On the night before a recent field trip, he asked if he could take something extra for the trip. I expected him to ask for candy in his lunch bag. Instead, he requested a tiny journal and pencil that would fit in his pocket.

One very important facet of learning, which is highlighted by the NWP in parent workshops and portfolio reviews, is publication and the need for students to have an audience. The children at this school know they have something in them worth sharing, and the parents have become partners in that experience. Isn't that what Americans are pleading for every day in the news? The parent workshops I have attended were absolutely cathartic for many of us. Being able to see first hand how writing is being introduced and infused into our children in such a usable way had comments such as "Why didn't they teach this way when I was in school? I can use this!" bouncing off the walls as fast as the ideas turned into paragraphs. Parents, grandparents, and teachers were all eager to share what they had written and how they had arrived at it, just as the students, including my son, do everyday. The teachers maintain a healthy diet of writing through the NWP workshops, and North Bay Elementary has implemented Parent Journals which go home with students each night. What a wonderful boost for young writers it must be to see their parents writing alongside them, and about them as well!

I realize that many parents are resistant to change and panic when they see a portfolio review instead of a report card as an indication of progress. Not only do I have a solid understanding of what my son is accomplishing, but so does he, as he is a part of the process as well. I feel sure that it is because the teachers are so well supported by NWP that things are working at North Bay Elementary. I take pride in knowing that his teachers are committed and interested in my son's learning. If the teachers are willing to go above and beyond to provide quality in the classroom experience which enhances and nurtures the limitless, tender young minds of this state, I certainly would expect the state to invest in a program that

gives them the proper tools and motivation. It makes me very sad to think how many children in this state are not getting all of this "good stuff" in their classrooms day in and day out. It makes me furious to think that it might be jeopardized for my son and his siblings. The NWP in Bay St. Louis is working. It is good for the students, the schools, the state and our future. It just does not make sense to suffocate one of the best things breathing life into Mississippi's choking public school system.

If this project loses funding, then the teachers could lose the opportunities they now have to meet and pool their resources, receive and offer feedback about ways to enhance writing in the classroom, and more frighteningly, lose enthusiasm. Without that, the benefits of the NWP don't get passed on to the students. When the students lose enthusiasm, the parents have little interest in involvement with the school. What you are left with is a plain old school, and quite frankly, I can find that anywhere. I am sincerely hoping for continued funding for the National Writing Project.

Senator COCHRAN. I am convinced that this has been a successful experience, not only for me and our staff members who are here, but also for our appropriations committee to get the benefit of comments from those who have been involved in the program from the inception, like Dr. Sterling and Dr. Swain, and those who support the program, Dr. Biggs, who is here, and this panel of witnesses, from your personal experiences, as well.

I also have to thank my Washington office and staff who are here, Ann Copland, who is the person who is our Legislative Assistant with primary responsibility for education issues in my office; Win Ellington, who is here, who helped us with arrangements for the hearing; as well as Rachel Spence, who was here earlier, and others who have been here, as well; Chris Richardson, who has accompanied me here today. We have a very dependable, hard working and enthusiastic group of staff members who spend a lot of hours working hard to be sure that the interests of our State and the people of our country are effectively represented in the Senate, and this gives me a chance to thank them publicly for that. Mark Laisch, who is a member of the staff of our appropriations committee, has come down from Washington to be here today and to be helpful to us in the preparation for this hearing. We are going on up to Jackson later in the week and have a hearing with superintendents and administrators at the State and district levels on Title 1, which is another program that is funded by the Federal Government that is very important to the State of Mississippi. And we will be looking at ways to learn more about how that program can be helpful to Mississippi.

Let me also say, just as a matter of—I do not want to embarrass him at all, but Brother Donnan, who is President of Saint Stanislaus, is here in the audience today, and a former principal of Catholic High in Baton Rouge and my cousin, incidentally, and I am very proud of that, my mother's first cousin. So I am glad to see him. But here in Bay St. Louis, he is available to you for advice and counsel, which may be helpful.

CONCLUSION OF HEARING

That concludes our hearing. And again, let me thank all of you who have participated. We appreciate your participation and your assistance very, very much.

[Whereupon, at 3:35 p.m., Tuesday, April 17, the hearing was concluded and the subcommittee was recessed, to reconvene subject to the call of the Chair.]